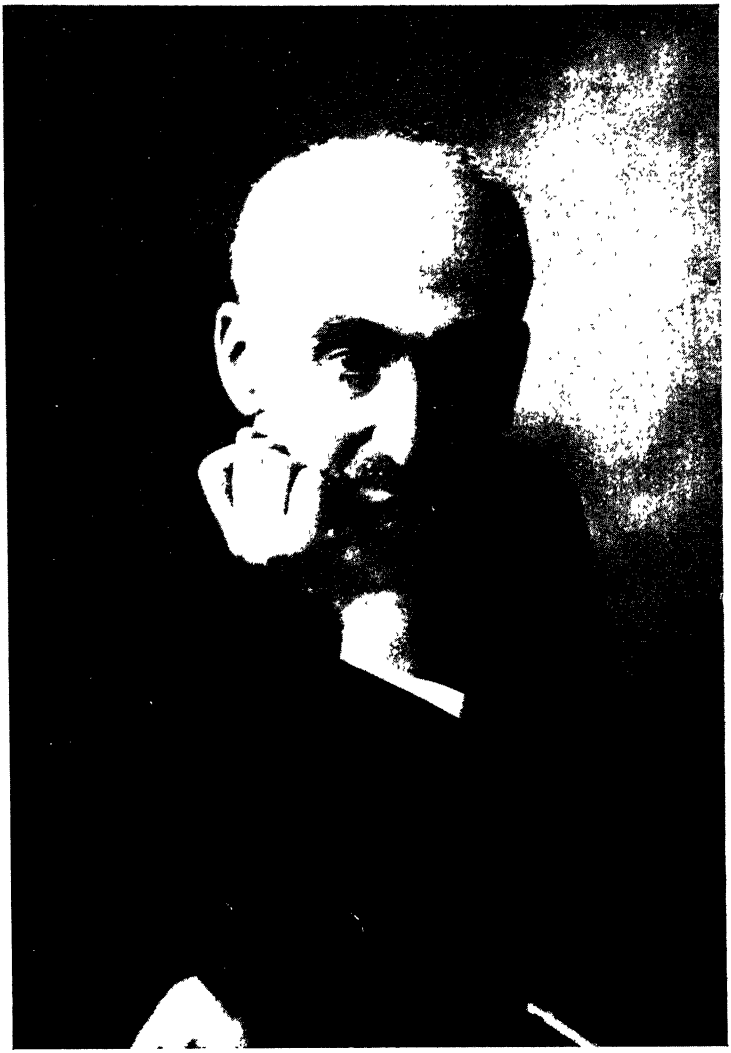

HENRI BERGSON

From the photograph by Henri Manuel

Introduction to MODERN PHILOSOPHY

BY

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CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

THE following chapters aim at giving a short but comprehensive account of the most important developments in Modern Philosophy. In preparing this brief survey, I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to avoid the use of all technical terms, and to describe the views of modern philosophers in language which will be intelligible to ordinary persons.

With the best will in the world, however, it is not an easy matter for a writer on Philosophy to avoid the charge of obscurity, not because of any professional leaning to the unintelligible—although it must in honesty be admitted that too many philosophers have mistaken obscurity of statement for profundity of thought—but because of the inherent difficulty of the subject-matter. Whatever deals with the fundamental and simple is bound to be difficult and complex, and it is no good ignoring the fact that philosophy, which is not lightly to be attempted by any, must always seem singularly like nonsense to some. I make no apology, then, for the difficulty of this book; it is at any rate easier than the philosophies it surveys.

When one attempts to reduce the corpus of modern philosophy to the compass of a small text-book, selection and compression become of paramount importance. What you select depends to a large extent on what you think significant, and, as the case of Anthologies demonstrates, no man will be found to agree in its entirety with another's selection.

In making my own selection I have endeavoured to follow the principle of only introducing those doctrines which pass the double test of being both important and distinctively modern. The omission of any account of the philosophy of the English

Idealists is perhaps the most important consequence of the adoption of this principle. Speaking broadly, I have dealt only with those views which have emerged since the publication of Mr. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, not because I desire to underrate the importance of the contribution to philosophy of the English Idealists, but because that contribution has been long enough before the world to be familiar to all English readers who are interested in philosophy. The important innovations which have been introduced into Idealist theory since the publication of Mr. Bradley's great work have been largely, if not wholly, due to the Neo-Idealist school of Italian philosophers, of whom Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile are the most prominent; and a chapter has accordingly been devoted to the exposition of the views of these philosophers.

I have endeavoured to follow the same principle of selection and omission throughout.

My thanks are due to Professor Wildon Carr for kindly reading through Chapters 3 and 5 in manuscript and making several valuable suggestions in regard to their contents.

C. E. M. J.

I

Modern Realism

Introductory. The difficulties of giving in a short space a comprehensive survey of modern Realism are considerable. They arise chiefly from the fact that Realism is not a body of systematic doctrine to which numbers of different philosophers can be found to subscribe. There are, indeed, different schools of Realists which are mainly identified with the names of particular philosophers; but although there is a certain amount of agreement between these various schools, the positions with regard to which this agreement obtains are mainly of a negative character, being based upon a common antipathy to Idealism. So soon as a constructive philosophy is attempted, important differences between the various schools of Realists begin to manifest themselves.

Our task is further complicated by the fact that, while the great Idealist systems endeavour to present a coherent view of the Universe as a whole, many Realists are prepared cheerfully to renounce the notion that there is a whole of which a coherent account can be given: there may be only an aggregate, the Universe being a gigantic box with a number of different contents, and the philosophy of an aggregate will be a catalogue of items rather than a systematic doctrine deducible from one general principle.

In any event, the belief that philosophy should be an absolutely systematic and complete doctrine is itself a philosophical assumption which remains to be proved, and, until it is so proved, the Realist for the most part remains content with finding out what can be asserted with a fair show of truth with regard to a number of different and often isolated problems.

Now it is easier to summarize a system than a catalogue, and it is impossible therefore to do more in this chapter than to indicate the main grounds for the common Realist refutation of Idealism, and then briefly to sketch one or two characteristic theories with regard to the problem which Realists have made peculiarly their own, and with regard to which their contribution to philosophy is most important, that is to say, the problem of sense perception. Realism is, however, a movement of very great significance in modern philosophy, and in order that the reader may enlarge the conception, formed from the outline sketched in this chapter, of the sort of attitude to the world as a whole that the Realist favours, I propose in the next chapter to trace in rather more detail the developments in the philosophy of a prominent Realist, Mr. Bertrand Russell, since this philosophy, both in its earlier and in its later phase, is fairly representative of the different types of Realist theories.

I. *Refutation of Idealism.* Modern Realism is historically to be regarded as a reaction from the various philosophies of Idealism. In order to grasp its significance it is necessary to understand the Idealist positions which it attacks, and the way in which it attacks them.

Now it is clear in the first place that the attitude of the ordinary man in the street to the Universe is that of an uncompromising Realist. He conceives of himself as existing in a world of objects which exist together with him, yet independently of him, and he regards his consciousness as a sort of searchlight which illuminates this world of objects and enables him to ascertain their number and their nature. This theory, in so far as it can be called a theory at all, makes no difference between seeming and being: things in fact are what they seem. Reflection, however, shows that there is much in our experience which it seems difficult to conceive of as being 'out there in the world'. Such phenomena as dreams, hallucinations, reveries, and the experience of

seeing double which attends intoxication, suggest that it is not everything in our experience that comes from outside. Where, then, are we to locate the objects of our dreams? Obviously in the mind of the dreamer. It seems possible, then, that we can experience ideas of our own which have no necessary counterpart in the world of outside objects: at any rate, the fact that we can perceive what is not there, that in short there is such a thing as error, means that the common-sense realism of the man in the street must, in certain respects at least, be abandoned. Idealism grasps at this possibility and develops it into a complete denial of the existence of the plain man's world.

The first step in the departure from the common-sense view is taken in the so-called Representationalism of Descartes and Locke. These philosophers conceived of consciousness not as a beam of light illuminating the outside world, but as a photographic plate upon which objects are represented. The representations of the objects on the plate are the ideas which appear in consciousness. Mind, therefore, perceives its own ideas, but does not perceive the external objects which stimulate consciousness and cause the ideas to arise. It is believed that a world of external objects exists, but it is denied that it can ever be directly known.

But Idealism could not remain long in this position. If we can never know the world of external objects, we cannot know that it possesses the property of causing our ideas, nor can we even know that it exists. The next stage, then, is to eliminate this world of external objects, and to rest content with a Universe containing mind which knows, and its mental states which are what it knows, and we have the Subjective Idealism of Berkeley and Hume. Berkeley indeed stopped short of the full logical development of his position and admitted the existence of other minds and of the self, though in point of fact we have ideas of neither. Hume, however, ruthlessly pushed to its conclusion

Berkeley's argument that a thing's existence consists of its being known, and came to rest in the position which is called Solipsism, a position which asserts that mental states are the only things that can be known to exist in the Universe.[1]

Kant's philosophy is an attempt to escape from the subjectivist Solipsism to which Hume's arguments were logically reducible. He not only formulates a 'Thing in itself' which, like the external object of Locke and Descartes, is never known and never can be known, but endeavours to endow the world of what is known, that is to say, the world which enters experience, with objectivity by attributing to mind the power of prescribing to this world its laws, so far at least as these are based upon the forms of time and space, and upon the categories.

Kant also introduced a new element in the shape of a distinction between the self as knower that owns as its states the objects that it experiences, and the self as known which is just one among a world of different objects. Hegel eliminated the 'Thing in Itself', extended the notion of the mind as the prescriber of laws to the Universe until consciousness came to be regarded as the source of all laws and all relations, and unified in one absolute soul the plurality of knowing minds or souls left by Kant, with the result that the various souls or selves as known, which are mere items in a world of other objects, came to be thought of together with their objects as mere fragmentary manifestations of the Absolute, and not to be regarded as completely real except in so far as they are or can be merged therein. Thus the Absolute is the only real thing that is left in the Universe, the apparent multiplicity of objects that we know being only partial aspects of the Absolute.

In this way the whole Idealist movement in Philosophy may be regarded as a development and an elaboration of the doubt that first assailed the common-sense Realist when he found that

[1] Hume did believe in the existence of other selves, selves meaning for him 'bundles of perceptions', but on his premises he had no ground for doing so.

certain of his perceptions were erroneous, or had at any rate no counterpart in the outside world. And it is in precisely the same way that the Realist movement may be regarded as an attempt to save the common-sense view of the world by accounting both for the fact of perception and for so-called erroneous perceptions, without reducing the whole physical Universe to modifications of mental states.

Some Realist theories succeed in retaining a picture of the world which is not very far removed from the notions of common sense; others, as we shall see in the case of Mr. Russell's later views, depart in their conclusions almost as far from the unreflecting attitude of every day as do the Idealists themselves. But the primary object which all have in common is the refutation of the Idealists.

The ordinary Realist method of disposing of the Subjective Idealism of Berkeley and Hume is to accuse it of basing a false conclusion on a true proposition. The true proposition is, 'It is impossible to discover anything that is not known', because it becomes known by the mere process of being discovered. From this proposition it follows that it is impossible to discover with certainty what characteristics things possess when they are not known. The Idealist then proceeds falsely to conclude, 'Things have no characteristics when they are not known; therefore the characteristic of being known is that which constitutes their existence: therefore things only exist when they are known'.

But the Idealist conclusion does not in fact follow. The only conclusion which can validly be based upon the proposition quoted above is that 'All known things are known'. This is a truism, and in so far as the Idealist argument asserts more than this, in so far, in fact, as it draws the conclusion which it does draw, it achieves this result by tacking on to this truism a falsity, this falsity being 'All things are known'. But from the fact that we do not know what characteristics things possess when they are

not known it does not follow that all things are therefore always known. Nor is it really a fact that we can never tell what characteristics things possess when they are not known. We can assert, for example, of a number that is so large that it has never been thought of the following characteristic—'The number in question possesses the characteristic of being half of an even number.'

A similar fallacy underlies the Idealist's use of the word 'idea'. The argument that we can only know our own ideas can be expressed in the form of what is called a Syllogism:

(1) Ideas are incapable of existing apart from a mind.

(2) Physical objects, in so far as they are perceived or known at all, are certainly ideas.

Therefore (3) All physical objects are incapable of existing apart from a mind.

This Syllogism, which is formally valid, shrouds an ambiguity in the use of the word 'idea'. In the major premise (1) the word 'idea' is used to denote the act of perceiving: in the minor premise (2) the object of the act, that is to say, the thing or content that is perceived. But the object of an act of thought can never be the same as the act of thought of which it is an object. Hence we shall find that most Realists begin by adopting an attitude towards mind which conceives of it as that which has the power of knowing things which are other than itself.

But a refutation of the Subjective Idealism of Berkeley and Hume does not necessarily carry with it a disproof of the more elaborate Idealism of Hegel. Hegel's philosophy is one which, whatever other claims it may make, takes its stand upon the existence of something other than states of the knowing mind, and, even if this something is 'Thought' taken as a whole, of which the knowing mind is an imperfect manifestation, it is contended that the Absolute does at least rescue Idealism from the reproach of being a Solipsistic philosophy.

But does this contention stand the test of analysis? The

Realist claims that it does not. The Absolute, he says, is either knowable or not knowable. If the Absolute is knowable, it must form part of the experience of the individual minds which are its own fragments; that is to say, its being, falling as it does within individual experience, affords no evidence for the existence of anything outside individual experience, and we revert to the Solipsist position again. If, on the other hand, the Absolute is unknowable, then it reduces itself to the status of the physical object of Descartes and Locke; that is to say, of something behind experience, the existence of which, from the very fact that it cannot enter into experience, must remain an unverified hypothesis, a mere guess.

The above dilemma is one which, according to the Realist, besets any philosophy which makes knowledge in any way constitutive of its objects, or, in other words, any form of Idealism. This phrase needs a little explanation. Most philosophers have held that since we can never know an object except as known, that is to say, since we can never know it as it is apart from being known, the object's being known forms an integral characteristic or part of the object as known, such that the object must be different as known from what it was before it was known. Hence the knowing of an object tends to modify or constitute the object, so that knowledge may be regarded as at least in part constitutive of the object it knows.

Some such reasoning as the above lies at the root of most Idealist systems, but the Realist holds it to be fallacious reasoning. Against it and against the various forms of Idealism we have considered, he urges the following propositions:[1]

(1) The entities (objects, facts, &c.) under study in logic, mathematics, and the physical sciences are not mental in any proper or usual meaning of the word 'mental'.

[1] These propositions, together with much of the preceding argument, are taken from *The New Realism*, a work by six American professors, published in 1912.

(2) The being and nature of these entities are in no sense conditioned by their being known.

Hence (3) Things may continue to exist unaltered when they are not known, or pass into and out of knowledge without prejudice to their reality.

(4) Knowledge is a peculiar type of relation which may subsist between a mind and any entity.

From these propositions there follow the general Realist conclusions: (1) that the nature of things is not to be sought primarily in the nature of knowledge; (2) that, accordingly, the nature of things is what it is independently of our knowing it; and (3) that it is therefore not mental.

There is one other question on which a word must be said before we leave the Realist refutation of Idealism: this is the question of the being and nature of relations. Most Idealist theories hold that relations are parts or states of their terms. The argument is briefly as follows: every object is clearly related to every other object in the Universe; thus a hen's egg is more oval than a cricket ball, more brittle than india-rubber, larger than a wren's egg, and smaller than an emu's. Unless the egg stood in all these relations to other objects it would not be the egg it is; therefore its relations do help to constitute the nature and being of the egg. Hence there are no such things as independent relations, but all relations are states of the terms or things they relate and make those terms what they are. It follows that, since all things are interrelated, the nature of each contains and forms part of the nature of all, and we are once more traversing the path which leads to the Absolute. It is essential therefore for the Realist to establish the independence of relations, if the independence and plurality of objects is to be maintained.

His reply consists roughly in asserting that the egg only stands in the various relations we have mentioned to other objects because it is itself an egg independently of these relations. If

the egg were its relations we should be compelled to say that the set of relations which is the egg stands in certain relations to a number of other sets of relations: we should in fact be left with a world containing an infinite number of relations with nothing left to relate.

Hence the Realist lays down the following axiom, known as the axiom of external relations:

'In the proposition "the term (*a*) is in the relation R to the term (*b*), (*a*) R in no degree constitutes (*b*), nor does R (*b*) constitute (*a*), nor does R constitute either (*a*) or (*b*)".' It will be seen, therefore, that the Realist contention that, when a mind (*a*) enters into relation with an object (*b*) (the relation in this case being the relation of knowing), the knowing of (*b*) by (*a*) does not modify or constitute (*b*), is only a special case of the general axiom of external relations.

II. *Realist Theories of Perception.* We must now consider what the Realists have to say on the positive side of the question. If objects are not to be resolved into states of the knowing mind, what account are we to give of the process of perception by which they become known? Most Realists deal at length with the problem of perception, and it will be readily seen that, if their object is to conserve as much as possible of the common-sense view of the world while making allowance for the possibility of error, the problem of perception must be the starting-point of their philosophy.

Realist views of perception may be divided into three types, the first of which maintains the existence of three, the second of two, and the third of one element only in perception. We will postpone our consideration of the third view (sometimes known as Neo-Realism) until the next chapter (when we shall have occasion to refer to it in connexion with the later developments of Mr. Russell's philosophy), and briefly describe the first and second.

(*a*) The Austrian philosopher Meinong holds that the three elements involved in the perception of an object are the act of thought, the content of the act, and the object. The act is the same in any two cases of the same kind of consciousness: thus, if I perceive a cow or if I perceive a horse, the act of perceiving is exactly similar on each occasion. What is different, however, is the content of my perception, this being a cow-content in the case of the first perception and a horse-content in the case of the second. The content is again clearly distinguished from the object, since it must exist in my mind now while the object may be out in the field, and may also be past as in the case of memory, or future as in the case of anticipation. As a perception, and not only a perception but a thought, must always be directed upon something, it is impossible for a thought to exist without an object, although an object may exist without a thought.

The chief difficulty of this view consists in the attempt to distinguish the act of thought from its content. A bare act of thought, divorced from all the characteristics which give it form, is as unthinkable as a bare material substance stripped of all the qualities which give it form. There is in fact no such thing as an act or an object which is devoid of qualities: the qualities constitute the act. It is, moreover, psychologically impossible to distinguish in consciousness a thought which is not a thought with a definite content. Most Realists accordingly prefer to run act and content together and to regard perception as involving two elements and two only.

(*b*) The view that in perception two elements only are involved is common to a great many Realists, and has been urged with great force and clearness by Professor Alexander, who speaks of perception as a process in which the mind enjoys itself in compresence with an object. The following is a typical statement of this view by Professor Dawes Hicks.

The relationship between a physical object and a knowing mind

is twofold, the object forming at once the stimulus of the act of knowing, and determining its character or content.

Thus a physical object, when placed in a certain juxtaposition to the sensory organs, produces a stimulation of those organs. This stimulation is conveyed by purely neural processes to the brain and so enters into consciousness. This consciousness is necessarily directed upon something—in point of fact upon the physical object which constituted the stimulus. The physical object is therefore at once the stimulus and the content of the conscious act. From the fact that the physical object determines the characteristics or content of the act, it follows that every act will be qualitatively different from every other act, a perception of red being therefore a different mental event from the perception of green. Now, throughout this process the mind is not a purely passive instrument: on the contrary it is active. Its activity consists mainly in selection, and selection is dictated by our own special interests, by our bodily equipment, and by our mental peculiarities. Thus it is obvious that a red rose, which we will call R, will appear in different ways to an artist, a botanist, and a colour-blind person. These different appearances, *r*1, *r*2, and *r*3, form the contents of the three acts of perception of the artist, the botanist, and the colour-blind person respectively. Because each perceiver emphasizes certain features of the presented whole at the expense of others, and emphasizes differently, each of these contents is different from the others. This does not mean that *r*1, *r*2, and *r*3 exist as actually selected aspects of R independently of the perceiver, in the sense in which R exists independently; *r*1, *r*2, and *r*3 are selections from the total qualities of R, which are only discriminated in R by the special bias of the perceiver's attention: they are, in fact, ways in which R is appearing to three different observers. Nevertheless, they are not entities which exist only in the mind of the perceivers, but special selections from the actually existent qualities of the object R. Thus we

have both saved the independence of external objects and accounted for the different appearances these objects present to different perceivers.

It is unfortunate that so simple and straightforward an analysis should not prove ultimately satisfactory. That in the opinion of many it does not do so, and that it is deficient more particularly in the primary requisite of accounting for error, the later developments of Realism which we shall proceed to describe in the next chapter bear witness.

III. *Critical Realism.* Another form of Realism which is prominent in modern philosophy has been propounded under the name of Critical Realism by seven American philosophers, Professors Drake, Lovejoy, Pratt, Rogers, Santayana, Sellars, and Strong. Its distinctive feature consists in its view of the nature of the objects which form the data of perception, with regard to which, it is asserted, not only the Idealists, but also other schools of Realists, have gone radically astray.

Realists, as we have seen, have held on the whole that these data are the actual physical existents which are believed to form the constituents of the Universe, and have argued that perception is a process by which these objects somehow get within our experience and are directly apprehended. But this account, it is urged, must be erroneous for the following reasons:

1. An object cannot be in two consciousnesses at once. If, therefore, it is in A's experience, taking 'in' literally to mean 'a part of', it cannot at the same time be in B's.

2. Science teaches that physical objects are never themselves the data of perception, but that these data are the messages which the physical objects send out. Thus the appearance of a star which is now seen directly overhead is really a message sent by a star which may have gone out of existence thousands of years ago. Thus it cannot be said that we actually experience the star. Thus all cases of perception register data which are at a different

moment in time (especially, e.g., in the case of hearing), and at a different point in space, as compared with the object which is supposed to have caused the data. Thus the datum of perception is a message which is other than the physical object which may be supposed to have dispatched it.

3. If the object gets into the experience of A, who has normal vision, as something blue, and of B, who is colour-blind, as something green, we are required to suppose that the object is both blue and green at the same time. Hence erroneous perceptions would be impossible.

But the Idealist view of perception is equally unsatisfactory. Idealists in general contend that the data of perception are psychological existents, ideas or mental states of the perceiver, which may or may not be copies of an outside object whose existence must at best remain an assumption. But our data cannot, it is urged, be our own mental states. For suppose that the datum perceived is, in the words of one of the Critical Realists, 'a round wheel about three feet in diameter moving away from us and now between this house and the next'; it is clear that my mental state is neither round, nor three feet in diameter, nor between this house and the next. The mental state must then be other than the datum perceived. Further, it is contended that though A and B may perceive an identical datum, as, for instance, an identical shade of red, A's mental state, from the very fact that it is A's, must be qualitatively different from B's.

But if the datum is neither the physical object, nor any selection from or aspect of that object, nor the mental state of the perceiver, it must follow that perception cannot be what is known as a two-term process. It must involve three terms, and the third term is the datum.

What, then, is the datum? It is a character-complex or essence which, although it is not the object, is taken in perception to be

one of the characteristics of an existing object. What happens in perception is roughly as follows. When an object C comes into contact with a conscious organism A it exerts an influence over A. This influence is causal, what it causes being among other things the appearance to A of certain character-complexes. These character-complexes B are the data of perception, being as it were projected by A into the outer world, or imagined as being out there; and in true perception they are, or they are identical with, the characteristics of C. Perception, then, is 'imagining character-complexes out there in the world together with an implied attribution of existence'. If the perception is correct, the character-complexes are the actual characteristics of C, whose influence caused their projection, and the attribution of existence is justified; if not, not. Of these character-complexes we are told that they do not exist: they have logical being or subsistence only, and are therefore not altered by the circumstance of their being the data of perception, nor by their being abandoned for other data. Professor Santayana indeed speaks of the essences or data much as Plato did of his famous Ideas or Forms: they are immutable, intrinsic, and essential; they subsist eternally in the Universe waiting to be lit up by our roving thoughts. But since in true perception the essences or data are, or are identical with, the characteristics of the object which started the whole process, the Critical Realist can urge that for him 'knowledge *is* a beholding of outer and absent objects in a very real and important sense—a beholding that is of their what or nature'. In other words, we do know the qualities and characteristics of an object through perceiving the data which reproduce these characteristics, although the actual physical existent, the *that* of the object, never is and never can be perceived.

The Critical Realist can also claim that his theory avoids the difficulties that usually beset the Realist account of error. For just as true perception means assigning a certain group of charac-

teristics B to a certain outside reality C whose qualities are identical with the characteristics in question, so error consists in ascribing characteristics or essences to a reality which does not possess them, that is, in supposing that our data are in fact the characteristics of some object, when they are not.

The theory which has just been outlined is not an easy one to follow, nor is the task of the student made lighter by important differences that lie concealed beneath the statements of their views made by the various essayists.

Thus, while for some the datum is a self-subsistent logical entity, found out there by the roving mind of the perceiver, for others it is a mental projection not found but imagined, its appearance being in fact due to certain occurrences in our mental states. The former view reduces perception to a mere accident, in which all connexion between the original object C and the datum B which we happen to perceive is lost: the latter is perilously akin to the subjective idealism which asserts that we only know our own mental 'projections' or 'imaginings'. If, however, we waive these differences of view and consider the doctrine of Critical Realism as a whole, we shall still find it open to serious objections. Of these the most important are the following:

1. Its analysis of perception precludes the possibility of any real knowledge of reality. Perception, as we saw, is a three-term process involving a knowing mind or mental state A, the datum or essence known B, and the physical object C with whose characteristics the data are in true perception identical. But if we always and in all circumstances know B and never in any circumstances know C, we cannot know anything about C. We cannot know, therefore, either that C exists or that it has the property of influencing our mind in such a way as to cause it to 'imagine' data. Furthermore, if we are denied all *direct* knowledge of the qualities or *what* of C, we cannot know

whether our data do in fact represent those qualities or not: we may believe on Pragmatic grounds that perception does as a rule give us an accurate representation of reality, but, unless we know this reality directly, the belief will remain little more than a mere guess, which we shall regard as probable or improbable according as we do or do not independently hold the doctrines of Critical Realism, but which cannot be used in support of those doctrines. Critical Realism therefore provides no criterion in practice for determining whether our perceptions are correct or not: if they are correct, their correctness can never be verified, while if they are not, it cannot be said that we ever perceive the qualities of the real at all.

2. Critical Realism attributes the fact that perception takes place to the influence exerted by an alleged object on the brain, an influence which causes the brain to project or imagine the characteristics of the object as its data. Thus if there is no influence there can be no projection of data.

The doctrine therefore fails to provide us with any account of the genesis of erroneous perception. If it is the influence of the object which causes us to imagine the characteristics of the object as being out there, how comes it that we sometimes imagine characteristics which are not those of the object, characteristics which, in the language of the Critical Realists, cannot be 'embodied in reality'? If, on the other hand, we possess the power of spontaneously generating data which have no counterpart in reality, why may we not assume that all perception is of this type?

3. The theory adopts a criterion of truth and error which though formally consistent can never be applied. True belief means assigning data B to an outside reality C whose characteristics are those data. But as we never know C we can never know whether our belief is true or false.

The theory, in fact, like all three-term theories of perception, constitutes a relapse into the Representationalism of the philoso-

pher Descartes. If it once be admitted that we cannot know reality directly, it follows that we cannot know reality at all, and we fall back logically either into Kantian Idealism, or into the subjective Idealism of Berkeley which asserts that we know only our own ideas.

2

The Philosophy of Mr. Bertrand Russell

MR. RUSSELL'S philosophy may be studied in three successive phases, which synchronize with the publication of three of his books entitled, *The Problems of Philosophy*, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, and *The Analysis of Mind*. The development of his philosophy, which can be traced in these three books, may be described as a continuous application of Occam's razor, an application which grows progressively more drastic, to the constituents of the Universe. In the Middle Ages the monk Occam enunciated a famous axiom to the effect that 'Entities are not to be multiplied without necessity'; and the changes which have taken place in Mr. Russell's philosophy consist of a continuous paring away of unessential elements, and the reduction of the Universe to an ever-diminishing number of fundamental constituents.

I. *The Problems of Philosophy*. The view advocated in Mr. Russell's later works is commonly known as Neo-Realism. *The Problems of Philosophy*, however, published in 1911, presents us with a philosophy which has little in common with these later developments. While it possesses certain features which point the way to Neo-Realism, it is more akin in spirit, in its attitude to Idealism, and in its treatment of the problems of perception, to the theories at which we have already glanced in the previous chapter, and a brief account of it will help to fill in the outline of our sketch of this earlier type of Realism.

Mr. Russell begins by an attack on the ordinary Idealist position as adopted, for instance, in the philosophy of Berkeley, which, as we have seen, asserts, so far as it is consistent with itself, that the only entities of which we can have knowledge are ideas in our minds. Hence, since all that we can know of a tree is a series of impressions or ideas which the so-called tree imprints upon our senses, the tree does in fact consist of these ideas which are entirely in our minds.

The plausibility of this theory, according to Mr. Russell, rests upon an ambiguity in the use of the word 'in'. When we speak of having a person in mind, we mean not that the person is in our mind but that a thought of him is in our mind; but the thought is different from the person, and we can, in fact, only think about the person because he is something other than our thought about him. This distinction between an act of thought and the object of the act is of fundamental importance; if it is overlooked or obscured, as Berkeley is held to have obscured it, we arrive at the position that we cannot know that anything exists except our own ideas. This position, known as Solipsism, is, according to Mr. Russell, logically irrefutable, but there is, on the other hand, no need to suppose that it is true. If, however, we are to renounce the Solipsist hypothesis, we can only do so by assuming that there does exist the distinction between the act and the object of thought to which I have just referred; that is to say, by defining mind to begin with as that which possesses the characteristic of becoming acquainted with things other than itself. Knowledge of objects therefore consists in a relation between mind and some entity other than the mind which knows.

Having established the possibility of the existence of external objects, we have now to consider what the various forms of this relationship may be. Of this relationship there are, according to Mr. Russell, two forms called respectively knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. 'We have knowledge by

acquaintance of everything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or knowledge of truths.' Thus if we consider any physical object, such as a table, what we know by acquaintance is not the table itself but a number of sense data, that is to say, entities perceived by the various senses, such as hardness, smoothness, brownness, oblongness, and so forth, which make up the appearance of the table. The knowledge of the table itself, on the other hand, is not direct: it is what Mr. Russell calls knowledge by description. We describe the table by means of the sense data we know directly, and we also assume the truth of a certain proposition such as 'These sense data are caused by a physical object'. But 'the actual thing which is the table is not,' says Mr. Russell, 'strictly speaking, known to us at all'. Nevertheless, our acquaintance-knowledge of the sense data and our knowledge of the general truth about the sense data with which we are acquainted are thought to justify us in assuming the existence of the physical object which we do not know directly. All knowledge by description will be found to involve in a similar way some knowledge of truths.

Knowledge of truths, however, involves in its turn knowledge by acquaintance of certain things whose nature is essentially different from that of sense data. These things are entities to which Mr. Russell gives the name of universals. Universals, which are also called concepts or abstract ideas, are entities such as whiteness, justice, in-ness, to the left of, and so forth.

Mr. Russell establishes the existence, or rather the 'subsistence' (for, in order to indicate the fact that they are neither in space nor in time and that they are not perceived by the senses, a word other than existence is used to denote the type of being they possess), of these entities on the following lines. If we take a statement such as 'Edinburgh is to the north of London' and concentrate on the meaning of the phrase 'to the north of', it

is clear: (1) That 'to the north of' means something, since the whole proposition would have a different meaning if 'to the south of' were substituted for it. (2) That this meaning is not contained in the meaning of Edinburgh. (3) That it is not contained in the meaning of London. (4) That it is not a creation of my mind, seeing that Edinburgh would still be to the north of London even if I did not know it, or even if I ceased to exist. Since, then, it is impossible to think of nothing, 'to the north of' is clearly something which subsists in its own right.

By similar methods Mr. Russell establishes the independent being or subsistence of other general ideas or universals such as whiteness, in-ness, and justice. This theory is in part derived from Plato, who maintained the eternal and independent being of Forms, such as the Forms of goodness, truth, and beauty, which are conceived of in a manner not very different from Mr. Russell's universals. Mr. Russell, however, goes farther than Plato in two respects: he recognizes the existence of universals not only of substantives, such as the universal 'humanity', and of adjectives, such as the universal 'whiteness', but also of verbs and prepositions.

Prepositions and verbs tend to express relations between two or more things, and unless the independent existence of these types of universals is recognized, it is impossible, on Mr. Russell's view, to establish the independence of physical objects, or indeed of the external world. The point is important since, as we have seen in the previous chapter, many if not most philosophers have held that relations, such as 'in-ness', were not independent universals external to their terms, but in some way or other states of or parts of the terms they related. If, however, this conclusion be admitted, if, that is to say, what is called 'the axiom of external relations' which asserts the independence of the relation of 'on-ness' be rejected, it follows either (1) that there is only one thing in the Universe, the seeming multiplicity

of objects in the world being really incomplete aspects of the same thing (Spinoza's view), or (2) that, if there be a number of different things, they cannot interact with one another, since such interaction would involve their coming into relationship (Leibniz's view).

It is essential therefore for Mr. Russell to establish both the independent being of universals and the fact that we know them directly by acquaintance; and it is essential not only for his general theory of the external world, but for his particular doctrine of knowledge by description. For since (1) knowledge by description always involves, as we have seen, some knowledge of truths; and since (2) we can only know truths, or, more precisely, we can only know that propositions are true, when we know the constituent parts of the propositions by acquaintance; and since (3) every proposition contains one or more universals; it follows that knowledge of physical objects is dependent for Mr. Russell both upon the existence of universals and upon our direct knowledge of them by acquaintance.

The chief importance of knowledge by description is that it enables us to pass beyond the limits of our immediate experience, and to know things which we have never experienced, e.g. that the President of the United States is clean-shaven, or that Caesar crossed the Rubicon.

As a summary of Mr. Russell's philosophy at this stage we may say that it recognizes the existence of at least four different kinds of entities: (1) knowing minds, (2) sense data which are known by acquaintance, (3) universals which are known by acquaintance, and (4) physical objects which are known by description. It will be seen that so far the philosophy has more in common with common-sense or naïve Realism than with Neo-Realism. We must now see how the application of Occam's razor proceeds to pare away these various entities in later developments of Mr. Russell's thought.

II. *Our Knowledge of the External World.* In *Our Knowledge of the External World*, published in 1914, Mr. Russell approaches the problem of sense perception from an entirely different point of view, his object being first to carry initial doubt to the farthest possible limits, and then, abandoning whatever can be doubted, to reconstruct the world of experience from the simplest materials with the minimum of assumptions. He points out how most philosophers in their accounts of sense perception have first implicitly assumed the existence of other people's minds, and have then found difficulty in accounting for the fact that the same physical object presents different appearances to two minds at the same time, or to one person at two times between which it cannot be supposed to have changed. As a result of these difficulties they have either come to doubt whether an external reality, other than mind, can exist at all (the position of most Idealists), or have been led to believe that if such a reality does exist, it can never be known (the position of Kant).

Mr. Russell's way out of the difficulty is to eliminate so-called physical objects from the Universe while still maintaining the existence of an external world. The question immediately presents itself, Of what is the external world composed if it is not composed of physical objects? Mr. Russell's answer is that it is composed of sense data. These sense data are not physical objects, but they are the entities, such as raps of sound and patches of colour, of which, to use the language of *The Problems of Philosophy*, we have knowledge by acquaintance, that is to say, of which we are immediately aware in sensation. These sense data Mr. Russell calls 'sensible objects', distinguishing between (1) 'our sensation, which is a mental event, consisting in our being aware of a sensible object, and (2) the sensible object of which we are aware in sensation. When I speak', he continues, 'of the sensible object, it must be understood that I do not mean such a thing as a table. . . . What I mean is just that patch of colour which is momentarily seen when we look at the table, or just that particular hardness

which is felt when we press it, or just that particular sound which is heard when we rap it. Each of these I call a sensible object, and our awareness of it I call a sensation'.

The chief difference between Mr. Russell's position here and that outlined in *The Problems of Philosophy* is that, whereas in the former work he was prepared to assume the existence of the table, although it was known only by description, he is now averse from admitting the existence of any class of entities other than the sense data which we experience in sensation; the existence of these sense data, unlike that of the table, is fleeting and momentary, and probably does not continue after sensation has ceased, or continues only for a short space of time. What, then, is the table 'of whose existence we are in practice so convinced?' Mr. Russell answers that it is a logical construction from the different appearances that sets of sense data present to different people. These appearances are necessarily always different owing to the fact that each mind looks out upon the world from a standpoint peculiar to itself. It follows that the 'world seen by one mind contains no place in common with that seen by another, for places can only be constituted by the things in and around them'. We may suppose, however, that 'in spite of the differences between the different worlds, each exists entire exactly as it is perceived and might be exactly as it is even if it were not perceived'. There are, therefore, an infinite number of such worlds, as many in fact as there are places from which a view of the world could be obtained, and whether any of these places is occupied by a mind or not there will be a special and peculiar view of the world from that place. Hence aspects of the world exist from all possible points of view, although no observer need necessarily be perceiving them from these points of view. It follows that each aspect of the Universe which is presented to a different place is independent of mind in respect of its existence, and an external reality is therefore established which is non-mental.

But we have still to explain the logical construction of the

common-sense physical object. The view of a world from any place Mr. Russell calls a 'perspective'; the view of the world from a place where there are sense organs, that is, a perceived perspective, 'a private world'; and the system of all the views of the Universe perceived and unperceived, 'the system of "perspectives"'. Two persons whose 'places' are near together perceive very similar perspectives, and can use the same words to denote them, asserting that they see the same table because the difference between the two aspects of the table presented to them is so small as to be negligible. Thus, these two persons can establish a correlation by means of similarity between the objects appearing in their different perspectives. Between these two near points of observation there will, of course, be other places whose distance one from another is even smaller than that between the two points where the observers are. From these other places the views of the world, though unperceived, will be even more alike. We can increase the nearness of the points of view indefinitely until, at their limit, we arrive at a continuous series of related perspectives, which may be said to constitute space.

We can now define the physical object. 'Given an object in one perspective, form the system of all the objects correlated with it' (by means of similarity) 'in all the perspectives; that system may be identified with the momentary common-sense "thing". Thus, an aspect of a "thing" is a member of the system of aspects which *is* the thing at that moment.' But the aspect is not the thing: the aspect—that is to say, that which is immediately experienced—is a set of sense data, and the thing—which is the system of all the different sense data which appear in all possible perspectives—is a logical construction and not a real existent. An analogy will be found in the logically constructed concept 'humanity', which is the system of all the real men who compose humanity, but which has no real existence in its own right.

At this stage, then, we have retained the external world, but eliminated the common-sense physical object. We have now to make the next advance in economy.

III. *The Analysis of Mind.* This advance is made in *The Analysis of Mind*, and, from our present point of view, its chief importance consists in the abolition of the distinction between our sensations and the sense data which we experience.

The doctrines put forward in Mr. Russell's *The Analysis of Mind*, published in 1921, have much in common with what is called Neo-Realism, a theory, largely American in origin, which has been advocated in this country by Professor T. P. Nunn. In this book Mr. Russell seeks to reconcile, or rather to bring under one common heading, psychology, or the science of mind, and physics, or the science of matter. He endeavours to achieve this result by establishing the existence of a common subject-matter for both sciences, and, in the course of his reasoning, he is led to adopt a peculiar position with regard to the vexed question of the relationship between mind and matter.

Common sense presents us with a world which appears to contain two different classes of existents: matter, which is known by mind, and mind, which knows matter. Scientists and philosophers have as a rule endeavoured to resolve this apparent duality into a more fundamental unity, and in so doing to bring the whole realm of existence under a common formula. For this purpose it is necessary to abolish either mind or matter. Scientists on the whole have endeavoured to eliminate mind; they have denied its efficacy and restricted its scope, while extreme views have regarded it as a highly attenuated form of matter; philosophers on the whole have tried to eliminate matter, convicting it on Idealist grounds of being a fictitious abstraction from an experience whose nature is mental through and through.

Recent developments have affected these traditional attitudes towards mind and matter in rather a peculiar way. In the first

place matter, under the influence of modern physics, has been growing less material. The physicist deals not with physical objects but with the curvatures of a four-dimensional continuum into which objects are resolved. In the second place mind, under the influence of modern psychology, has become progressively less mental. The Behaviourist school in psychology contends that the sum total of our knowledge of any person is limited to our observation of his behaviour. Mind cannot be observed, and, though its existence is not explicitly denied, it remains at best a doubtful inference from observed behaviour. This is, it is true, an extreme position in psychology, but it is the logical development of a tendency which is sufficiently widespread. Mind and matter having both lost their most salient characteristics, the difficulty of bringing them under a common formula is correspondingly diminished; but this result is achieved not by merging either into the other, but by deriving both from a more fundamental stuff of which the Universe may be supposed to be composed. To this stuff Mr. Russell gives the name of 'neutral particulars', the word neutral being intended to convey the fundamental character of the particulars, and the fact that they are in themselves neither mental nor material. These particulars are arranged in different contexts. Taken in one context and arranged in a certain way, they form the subject-matter of psychology; taken in another context and arranged in another way, they form the subject-matter of physics.

The position is not an easy one to grasp, but an illustration, which Mr. Russell himself uses, may perhaps serve to make it plainer.

If a photographic plate is exposed to a star on a clear night, it reproduces the appearance of the star. We are accordingly forced to conclude that at the place where the plate is, and at all places between it and the star, something is happening which is specially connected with the star. Similarly at every place to

which the star is presented something is happening which is specially connected with the star, although, unless at the place in question there is an object akin to a photographic plate, that happening is not recorded.

The complete system of all these happenings, or, in other words, the system of all the appearances of the star at different places, constitutes the momentary star. So far the argument is only a repetition of the view already expressed in *Our Knowledge of the External World*. Let us now return to the photographic plate. Many other things are happening at the plate besides the presented appearance of the star. Among these are the appearances of other stars, and doubtless also of numerous other objects whose impression is too faint for the plate to record. It follows, then, that, besides the happenings which consist of the collected system of all the appearances or aspects of our original star at different places, we can also collect together at a given moment another system of happenings which are occurring at the place where the plate is. One particular or member of this second system, namely, the appearance of the original star, will belong also to our first system of particulars which is the star. Thus, every particular belongs to two distinct series or systems of particulars, namely, that series which together with itself constitutes the physical object, and that series which together with itself constitutes the appearances of all objects at a given place.

Now let us suppose that the place at which the appearance of the star is presented is occupied not by a photographic plate but by a mind. The appearance of the star at that place will now be called a sensation, and will belong to the series of sensations which taken together at any one moment constitute what is called a mind at that moment. It remains, however, all the time a member of the other series to which it belongs, namely, the series which constitutes the star, and as a member of this series it forms one of the sense data which are presented to mind. The conclusion is

that sensations and sense data, instead of being separate and distinct according to the view put forward in *Our Knowledge of the External World*, are really identical entities, these entities being the neutral particulars which, according as they are taken in one or other of two different systems or contexts to each of which they belong, are called respectively sense data and sensations. The difference between what is called a mind and what is called an object presented to a mind is therefore a difference not of substance but of arrangement. We arrive therefore at the following conclusions:

(1) A perception of an object is the appearance of the object at a place where there is a brain with sense organs and nerves forming part of the intervening medium. (2) An object is the sum total of the appearances (of which the appearance which is a perception is one) presented by it at all places at a given moment. (3) A mind is the sum total of all the appearances presented at a place at which there is a brain with sense organs and nerves forming part of the intervening medium at a given moment; a mind is in fact, to revert to the language of *Our Knowledge of the External World*, the view of the world from a particular kind of place.

It may be asked in what sense such a theory can be termed a realistic one. Its divergence from the common-sense theory of naïve Realism is far-reaching and obvious, and it must be admitted that, as applied to the later developments of modern philosophy, the old labels of Realism and Idealism are hopelessly inadequate. It should be sufficient therefore to demonstrate the radical difference of this view from any form of Idealism without insisting too strongly on its claim to the title of Realism.

Mr. Russell is asserting the existence of a world of neutral particulars which, so far from depending for their existence upon knowledge by mind, are not affected by the circumstance of their being known by mind: they are not in fact known by mind at

all. Mr. Russell's position is that a cross-section of these particulars arranged in a certain system forms the actual stuff of which mind is made, that each one of the particulars belonging to this cross-section is at the same time a member of another cross-section, and that as a member of this second cross-section it constitutes an aspect of the object known by mind. This view, which reduces mind as a certain arrangement of particulars to a position of relative unimportance, is clearly opposed to any form of Idealistic interpretation of the Universe.

Two questions remain to complete our sketch of Mr. Russell's development, and on these we have space only to indicate his view without entering into the reasons for it.

The first is the question of error. All forms of Neo-Realism find difficulty in accounting for the existence of error. If the function of mind in perception is limited to an awareness of sense data and its constructive powers are reduced to a minimum or bluntly declared to be non-existent, it is not easy at first sight to see how erroneous perception can occur. The mind cannot be aware of what does not exist, and the blue sense datum of the colour-blind man who is looking at the grass must therefore be pronounced as real as the green sense datum of the person with normal vision. The Neo-Realist is, thus, debarred from adopting the view that mind creates error for itself, by his restriction of the function of mind to that of discovering or becoming aware.

Mr. Russell boldly embraces the difficulty by asserting that there are no such things as 'illusions of sense'. 'Objects of sense,' that is to say, sense data, 'even when they occur in dreams, are the most real objects known to us.'

What, then, is the basis of our belief in the comparative unreality of dreams and the complete unreality of hallucinations? It is clear that, since all objects known to sense are equally real, we cannot find our criterion of unreality in any special characteristic of the relationship between an unreal object and mind, such that

all unreal objects do stand in this particular kind of relationship to mind, whereas all real objects stand in a different kind of relationship. We must, therefore, look for it in the relationship subsisting between the so-called unreal object and objects commonly believed to be real. 'Objects of sense', says Mr. Russell, 'are called "real" when they have the kind of connexion with other objects of sense which experience has led us to regard as normal; when they fail in this they are called "illusions".' What is illusory, however, is not the object of sense, but the inference to which it gives rise. Thus, when I dream I am in America and wake up to find myself in England, the dream is stigmatized as unreal since the customary days on the Atlantic which are normally connected with a visit to America are known not to have intervened.

The other question to which a passing reference must be made is the question of universals. As we have seen, the Universe pictured by Mr. Russell in *The Problems of Philosophy* is peopled with hosts of universals of which we are supposed to have knowledge by acquaintance. This position is abandoned in later books. The argument by means of which Mr. Russell is enabled to eliminate universals from the list of entities he finds necessary for the construction of his universe is derived from mathematical logic, and is difficult to grasp. While not committing himself to a definite denial of the possibility of the existence of universals, Mr. Russell finds it unnecessary to postulate these entities in order to account for the possession of a so-called common quality by members of a class of entities which are grouped together because of their possession of that quality. There is, he thinks, no need to assume the existence as a universal of the quality in question in addition to the class, since the existence of the class of entities which possess the quality is sufficient to account for the known facts.

The proof of this assertion is as follows: When a relation exists

such that, if one term has this relation to another, then the other has it to the one, the relation is termed 'symmetrical'. Such a relation is that of 'being the brother or sister of'. A 'symmetrical' relation is further called 'transitive' when, if one term has the relation to a second and the second has it to a third, then the first term also has it to the third; thus, if A is called by the same name as B and B is called by the same name as C, then A is also called by the same name as C. Now, whenever a number of terms possess a common property or quality, transitive symmetrical relations exist between them; but in all such cases 'the class of terms that have the given transitive symmetrical relation to a given term will fulfil all the formal requirements of a common property of all the members of the class'. Hence, as the existence of the class is certain, and that of the common property as something over and above the class is doubtful, it is more economical only to posit the existence of the class. This principle is called by Mr. Russell 'the principle of abstraction'. By its means, and by means of the further analysis carried out in *The Analysis of Mind*, Mr. Russell is enabled to construct his Universe exclusively from sense data and sensations, these sense data and sensations being themselves only special arrangements of more fundamental neutral particulars.

Criticism. Mr. Russell's views, especially in their later developments, do not find favour with many philosophers. This fact may partly be accounted for by the consideration that, if Mr. Russell's attitude to the world is the right one, no sphere is left to Philosophy which she may regard as peculiarly her own. In *The Analysis of Mind* the place and methods of philosophy are abandoned for physics and psychology respectively, while Mr. Russell suggests that the most fruitful source of investigation in the future will be found in a third science, more fundamental than either physics or psychology, which will study the arrangements of the neutral particulars which lie at the basis of both mind and matter.

The questions at issue here between Mr. Russell and more orthodox philosophers are largely questions of object and of method. Philosophers have held that it was their business to take all knowledge for their province and, by synthesizing the results obtained by the special sciences, to endeavour to obtain a view of the Universe as a whole, which was more comprehensive than that to which any single science could aspire. Philosophers, therefore, while accepting without question the results which the various sciences have reached, each within its special sphere, have proceeded to deduce therefrom by purely rational processes certain considerations tending to show what must be the character of the Universe as a whole. The philosopher is concerned, accordingly, not with science itself, but with the nature of the Universe which the existence of science implies; not with experience itself, but with the question of the conditions or presuppositions necessarily involved in the fact that experience is what it is. It is this conception of the aims and methods of philosophy that Mr. Russell questions at the outset, and many of the Neo-Realists share his scepticism. For him no concrete results are attainable, just as no concrete results have been attained, by the methods of *a priori* reasoning which philosophy has hitherto pursued. He advocates, therefore, that philosophy should dissolve itself into the various special sciences, and should proceed by scientific methods to arrive at isolated, specific results, instead of speculating at large about the results achieved by other forms of inquiry. He holds, that is to say, that philosophy should take its problems one by one and endeavour to solve them piecemeal, that for such piecemeal solutions it is not necessary to have a complete theory of the Universe, and that there is no such thing as philosophic truth, that is, truth about the Universe as a whole, in addition to and other than the collection of true solutions of specific, scientific problems.

The questions at issue here are fundamental, and anything like

an adequate treatment of them would take us far beyond the confines of the present book. If Mr. Russell is right, most philosophy is meaningless; if he is wrong, we may still hope by the methods which philosophy has traditionally pursued to arrive at truth about the Universe. Whether he is right or wrong, however, it is certain that men will continue to philosophize, if only because of the ennobling and widening effect upon the intellect of philosophical speculation, and the deep-seated character of the instinct of curiosity to which it appeals.

But although a discussion of the general question is beyond our present scope, it will be relevant to mention three considerations with regard both to the revolution Mr. Russell advocates in philosophical method, and to certain of the specific conclusions at which he arrives.

(*a*) The strictures which Mr. Russell passes on the methods of traditional philosophy are themselves the outcome of those methods. It is philosophical reflection about the nature of reality as a whole, and about the results achieved by the special sciences and their significance for our conception of reality as a whole, which leads Mr. Russell to the conclusion that no concrete results can be obtained by philosophical reflection about reality as a whole. Yet this conclusion constitutes in itself a statement about the nature of reality, a statement which has philosophical purport and is reached by philosophical methods; and, even if this statement is to the effect that truth about the Universe is not to be reached by the methods of traditional philosophy, it is, nevertheless, invalidated by the very fact which it affirms. If no philosophical conclusions reached by traditional methods are demonstrably true, then the statement that they are not is itself not demonstrably true. It would seem, therefore, that Mr. Russell is not justified in using the methods of traditional philosophy in order to discredit those methods.

(*b*) The problem of error is one of the most difficult in philosophy. When Mr. Russell says that all objects known to the senses

are real, there is clearly a certain sense in which his statement is true. This sense embraces also the objects which we construct for ourselves in imagination and which appear to us in dreams. It is clear also that if we accept his view that objects of sense are the same entities as our sensations of those objects taken in a different context, there can be no such thing as error or illusion.

If, however, we are unable to go to the length prescribed by Mr. Russell's latest view, if in fact we adhere to the more ordinary Realist view that thoughts about objects are different from the objects thought about, a different, and in many ways more satisfactory, criterion of error suggests itself.

We shall say that a true thought is one which corresponds with a reality existing independently of it; that a false or illusory thought is one which has no such corresponding reality. The advantage of this position is that it requires the truth of every thought to be tested by something other than itself, instead of allowing it to be established—as must necessarily be the case if there is no object other than the thought—by the self-assertiveness of the thought itself. Of course such a position postulates the existence of a mind which is active, to the extent of being able to go out beyond the sense data presented to it, and which can therefore create error for itself. Mr. Russell's latest position would presumably deny to mind this activity. But if mind is not active, it cannot act erroneously; there is therefore no such thing as intellectual error; and it accordingly becomes difficult to see how Mr. Russell could deny to opposing views as to the constitution of mind and the nature of error a validity equal to that of his own.

(*c*) The manner in which Mr. Russell disposes of universals is unsatisfactory. In his view the existence of a class of terms possessing a given relationship to a certain given term will fulfil all the requirements of a common property belonging to each

member of the class; there is, therefore, no need to postulate the existence of the common property as a universal.

But how are the members of the class collected together in the first instance? They are collected in virtue of the fact that they possess certain affinities with one another, which are such that entities not belonging to the class do not possess them. These affinities constitute a certain quality. Mr. Russell defines this quality as that of 'possessing a given transitive symmetrical relation to a given term'. But, however we define it, its existence appears to be a necessary presupposition of there being a class at all. If there were no common quality, there would be no class of entities which could be collected together because they have it. Since, then, it is necessary to postulate the existence of the quality in order to explain the class, we cannot use the class to do the work of the quality: we cannot in fact substitute the class for the quality from the very fact that the quality is the condition of there being a class. Hence the quality exists independently of the class, and hence we must readmit universals into our universe. But if we admit the existence of universals we have clearly admitted something which it is impossible to account for in terms of sensations and sense data, and the position adopted by Mr. Russell in *The Analysis of Mind* will have to be still further modified.

3

Neo-Idealism

I. *Introductory.* For many philosophers the school of thought known as Neo-Idealism constitutes the most significant and original, as it is certainly the most recent, of all modern developments in philosophy. The doctrines of this school, of which the Italian philosophers Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile are the chief exponents, although claiming a validity which is

universal, are markedly nationalist in origin and characteristics, and both Croce and Gentile claim for them that, in their insistence on the significance of art and of history, they express a distinctively Italian outlook on the Universe.

Our concern, however, is with their philosophical import, and from this point of view we shall most easily grasp their significance by considering their relationship to the philosophy of Hegel, of certain aspects of whose system they may be regarded as the logical development.

Hegel may be said to have bequeathed to the world of philosophy two distinct doctrines which, though they may be regarded and were regarded by Hegel himself as complementary and ultimately reconcilable, are held by some to be incompatible.

These doctrines are: (1) That thought is a living concrete reality and that, since thought, our thought in point of fact, is the only type of existent of whose reality we are definitely assured, thought must be regarded as that in terms of which we are to interpret the whole of reality. (2) That behind the immediate thought or experience of which we are aware, transcending it and yet immanent in it, there is a total concrete unity of thought in terms of which alone individual experience becomes intelligible, and through participation in which it is real.

While not by any means neglecting the first of these doctrines, what we may call the normal developments of Hegel's philosophy have tended to emphasize the second, and the insistence on the complete reality of the total unity of thought, the Absolute as it is called, and on the only partial reality of the thought of individuals in so far as it falls short of this full reality, is the central doctrine of the important school of English Idealism of which Mr. Bradley and the late Professor Bosanquet[1] are the chief exponents. Now the significant point about this development is that it is one which in the long run regards the Universe as static

[1] Professor Bosanquet died early in 1923.

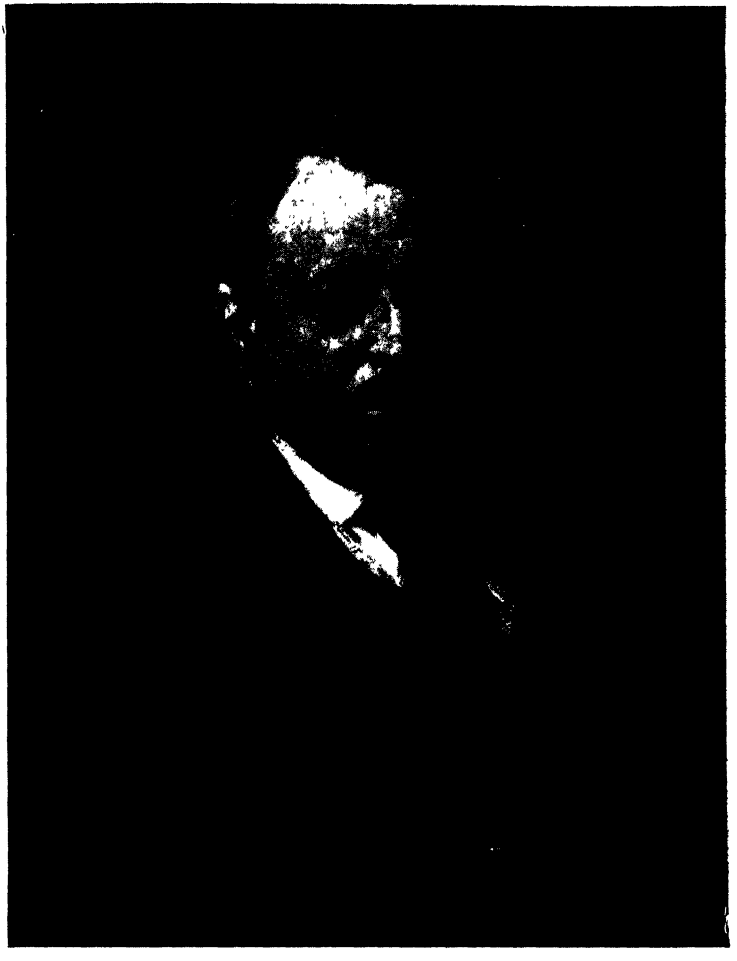
and completed. Individual thought may be continuously developing and continuously synthesizing the results of its development; but the ultimate structure of the Universe remains a unity whose nature, being all that it is, can never become more than it is; it is therefore immutable. This recognition of the character of completedness of the whole on the part of the English Idealists does not in their view imply that the totality of the Universe is dead and finite. On the contrary it is ever new in its continual expression of itself in finite terms, and, since none of these terms can express it adequately, each expression of itself is different. But seeing that, although immanent in each partial expression, it retains, nevertheless, its character of infinite totality, it cannot in itself be supposed to change, or, in other words, to be historical in character, since history presupposes change in what it records. This conception has been variously attacked under the name of the 'block Universe', by William James and the Pragmatists, by the Realists, and finally by the Neo-Idealists. It is attacked more particularly because, by locating the Absolute, with which reality is identified, behind and beyond our finite experience, it makes reality transcend our experience and so precludes the possibility of knowledge of reality; because, by making the Absolute the immanent spring from which all thought rises as well as the all-embracing sea into which all thought merges, the universal presupposition of experience as well as the final synthesis of experience, it renders progress non-existent and change unreal; and because for this very reason Reality becomes an embodiment of thought as a passive structure, and not an expression of thinking as an active principle.

If, in short, the Universe is really given and immutable as a whole, the apparent differentiation and multiplicity which it exhibits are equally given and immutable, and the Hegelian dictum that 'Philosophy is History' becomes meaningless.

Into the merits of the controversy between the English school of Idealists and their critics we cannot enter here. But it will be

well to pause for a moment and to examine the implications of the dictum 'Philosophy is History', since it is this phrase more than any other that constitutes the point of departure for the developments in Hegel's philosophy for which the Neo-Idealists are responsible. If the only thing that exists in the Universe is mind, History will be the History of mind; it will record not the occurrence of events, but the developments of mind. So far the Neo-Idealist is at one with the Hegelian. But it is here that the point of departure to which we have already referred occurs. If reality is a static Absolute, it cannot advance in time; it cannot therefore progress; if the structure of thought is already complete, the activity of thinking, which implies change and development, cannot, in the Neo-Idealist view, be of the essence of Reality; and, since History inevitably involves the conception of development and progress which History records, there can be no such thing as real History. It follows, therefore, that if we are to save any meaning for the Hegelian phrase 'Philosophy is History', we must, according to the Neo-Idealists, definitely abandon the second of the two positions bequeathed by Hegel, and, forgetting the static Absolute behind the multiplicity and immediacy of experience, concentrate on the multiplicity and immediacy of experience. And it is precisely in this abandonment and in this concentration that the advance made by Croce and Gentile consists. For them, mind, active, self-creative and self-creating mind, is literally the only thing in the world, and besides mind there is nothing, not even an all-generative Absolute at the beginning or an all-merging Absolute in the end.

Now Philosophy studies the nature or being of reality; that is to say, it studies the nature or being of mind. But, according to the Neo-Idealists, it is the nature or being of mind to be self-creative: mind creates therefore what it interprets, and it interprets what it creates. As creative, mind is History; it is making reality, and History therefore is present reality: as inter-



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From the painting by Giacomo Grosso

pretative, mind is Philosophy: Philosophy therefore is nothing but the continuance of the activity which it interprets. We may go one step farther and say that it *is* that activity: for, since mind is what it makes itself, it is the process of its own self-realization: therefore the reflection by mind on mind's nature and being is itself mind's nature and being. Hence the Philosophy of History is the same as the History of Philosophy.

The Universe therefore as conceived by the Neo-Idealists not merely includes an advance in time, as it did for Hegel, but actually is and consists in such an advance, being an unrolling of mental events. Thus Reality is a perpetual becoming, whose completion would be self-contradictory. It moves because, in Croce's words, 'every particular form is particular, and this spirit' (i.e. reality) 'does not stay still, but rather is never as the whole in any one of its particularizations, and therefore its true being is just its circular movement which, in its perpetual rotation, produces the perpetual increment of itself upon itself, the ever new history'. Reality is conceived of therefore as a recurrence of cycles rather than as a progress *ad infinitum*; at every instant something is attained, yet nothing is ever completely attained, and this twofold characteristic is exhibited by reality throughout. 'The true conception of progress', says Croce, 'must therefore fulfil at once the two opposite conditions, of an attainment, at every instant, of the true and good, and of raising a doubt at every fresh instant, without, however, losing what has been attained; of a perpetual solution and of a perpetually renascent problem demanding a new solution; it must avoid the two opposite one-sidednesses of an end completely attained and of an end unattainable, of the "progressus ad finitum" and the "progressus ad infinitum".'

This extract from Croce will serve the double purpose of summarizing the general metaphysical conception of the Neo-Idealists, and of indicating the attitude adopted by Croce to the

Universe regarded from the special point of view of ethics. We must now examine in a little more detail the application of this conception to the traditional problems of philosophy, and from this point onwards it will be convenient to consider the theories of Croce and of Gentile separately.

II. *Benedetto Croce.* Croce's Philosophy is entitled by him 'The Philosophy of the Spirit', and consists of four volumes called respectively *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*; *Logic as the Science of the Pure Concept*; *Philosophy of the Practical—Economics and Ethics*; and *The Theory and History of Historiography.* Each of these works has been translated into English by Mr. Douglas Ainslie. Let us begin by restating with greater particularity the general doctrine of Croce that the only thing which exists is mind, and try to understand the foundation on which its seeming paradox rests.

Croce starts from the position common to all Idealist philosophers, that experience, *our* experience, to be precise, is the only thing of whose existence we can be absolutely certain. Experience alone therefore possesses in its own right the full title to be called real; everything else is only real in so far as it is a movement, a grade, a factor, a condition, or a presupposition of experience. This experience must furthermore be present and actual, the past and future only being real in so far as they depend on, are continuous with, or are presupposed by the present.

Now experience appears at first sight inalienably to involve the conception of that which is experienced: it seems to suggest an object which stands as it were face to face with the experiencer, and in so doing stimulates the experience and determines its character. But this suggestion is a delusion. The distinction between experience and the object of experience is a distinction made within experience itself, the experience, namely, with which we start. This experience with which we start is a whole, a unity, mental through and through, and the distinction made within it

between an experience and the object of an experience is a distinction which is itself a product of the experiencing mind: we experience, not the object, but our experience of the supposed object. Hence, since our experience is the only thing of which we are directly aware, there is no need to suppose that the object, or indeed the whole world of external matter believed to be independent of mind, is anything more than a mental construction, a species of abstraction made by mind for its own purposes from the concrete whole of experience. But if there is no external object it is clear that mind must create its own objects, and we are accordingly forced to the view that experience is a self-determining and self-creating activity, which is both self-begetting and self-begotten. And, since whatever is real must be of this type, it follows that reality is a universal Mind or Spirit which creates alike itself and its environment. Mind therefore is like a Universe without windows. Nothing can pass into it or pass out of it. And, since there can be no such thing as a reality without form, it follows that every form which reality can assume must have its ground within mind or experience. All reality is thus engendered from experience, and we have no knowledge of a reality which is not in this way formed out of our experience.

Now reality does in fact assume for us a variety of forms, and since, in virtue of the fact that each form is a form of experience, each possesses an equal reality, the only task of philosophy is to grade these forms in their proper order, to determine their relationship to each other, and to reveal the part they play in constituting the concrete whole of experience which is the reality we know. This is the task which Croce's philosophy sets out to perform.

A. *The Theoretical Activity.* The first form is that of knowing, which Croce calls the theoretical activity. From the fact that our conception of experience requires us to believe that mind itself generates or actualizes the material which forms the subject-

matter of knowledge, it follows that the knowing form of activity must have two subgrades, the first of which will be the form under which the mind supplies the material, which under the second form it arranges and classifies. These two subgrades are called respectively (*a*) Intuition with its corresponding science of aesthetic, and (*b*) Conceptual thinking with its corresponding science of logic. We must consider each of these subgrades separately.

(*a*) *Intuition.* For Croce there is no problem of sense perception, that bugbear of the Realists. There are no objects of sense and no independent sense data; and, since there are no objects or data given to experience, there can be no passive element in experience consisting of the mere acceptance or awareness of these data. Perception therefore is not, as many previous philosophers have thought, a process in which a mind A becomes aware of something outside it, B, or in which A moulds B, or in which A becomes mixed with or interpenetrates or synthesizes B, but an activity in which A generates for itself its own data in the shape of images and intuitions. This activity is called the aesthetic activity, and the process by which the data of thought are created is called a process of imagination or of intuition.

This brings us to the most distinctive feature of Croce's philosophy: the faculty of perception so defined is pre-eminently the faculty of the artist or of the poet. This does not mean that only artists or poets perceive. What it does mean is that in giving an account of the machinery of perception on Croce's lines we find that we are in fact describing the behaviour of the artist and the poet. We have said above that the aesthetic activity produces its data for itself; describing this process more precisely we shall say that mind has intuitions and expresses these intuitions in the form of images. This does not mean that the intuition and the image are distinct, or that an unexpressed intuition can exist in its own right. The intuition and the image are only spoken

of as two owing to the exigencies of language; and the fact that subsequent reflection can distinguish them as two distinct phases in the aesthetic activity does not mean that they possess a separate existence or can function separately. There is in fact no such thing as an unexpressed intuition; for the intuition is its expression. But it is just this expression of intuitions in images which is the business of the artist. Art is lyrical; it is the giving expression to the intuitions in the poet's soul: beauty itself is expression or rather successful expression, and disgust at ugliness disapproval of a failure to express. And, just as the creation of beauty is expression, so is its appreciation: we only appreciate a work of art in so far as it succeeds in expressing the intuitions which are our own. In saying that art is expression, Croce means to imply among other things that it is expression and nothing else. It is characteristic of the aesthetic activity to take things just as they are, and, without reflection, classification, definition, arrangement, or estimate of their reality or unreality, to express them in concrete form or shape. But this is not to be taken to imply that it is an external object whose influence upon himself the artist seeks to express, in the sense in which we should say that the beauty of a spring morning inspired a Shelleyan lyric. The things which the artist expresses are intuitions which form themselves within himself, intuitions which are generated by mind and which form the stuff of which reality is made. The position which Croce adopts may therefore be summarized briefly as follows.

(i) In all experience there is involved an element, grade, moment, call it what you will, in which intuitions are simply accepted and expressed without either selection or reflection. The activity of this moment, as Croce calls it, is the inevitable condition of all experience and of all thinking. Though never occurring in actuality without the conceptual elements (see (*b*) below) which constitute thought, this activity is logically separable

from them, whereas all thinking or conception is dependent upon its prior occurrence; that is to say, thinking is logically inseparable from it. Croce therefore calls the aesthetic the lowest moment in experience, as opposed to Kant and others who regarded it as the highest, intending by the word 'lowest' to signify that it is that which must logically precede the rest.

(ii) This element in experience is that which chiefly characterizes the work of the artist and the poet. There is theoretically an initial stage in perception in which every man is both a poet and an artist. 'If', says Croce, 'we think of man at the first' (imaginary) 'moment of his unfolding theoretic life, his mind as yet unencumbered by any abstraction or any reflection, in that first moment, purely intuitive, he can be but a poet. Art, which creates the first presentations and inaugurates the life of knowledge, also continually keeps fresh in our mind the aspects of things which thought has submitted to reflection and the intellect to abstraction, and so for ever is making us become poets again. Without it, thinking would lack its stimulus and the very material of its mysterious and creative work.' Croce himself is an eminent art critic and writer on literary subjects, and the bulk of his work will be found to consist of a detailed application of his theory that art is expression to a criticism of the work of particular writers and artists.

(*b*) *The concept.* The second subgrade of the theoretic activity is conceptual thinking, which universalizes what is presented in the bare intuition. More particularly, it is a process of putting relations in between the intuitions and images which the first grade of the theoretic activity has supplied, and a process of knowing those relations. As we have seen, this conceptual activity is inevitably preceded by the aesthetic activity which supplies it with its material, and cannot take place without it. We have intuitions which are intuitions of, or which more correctly *are*, individual things, like good wine, good tennis, good character,

and it is the concept of goodness which, by enabling us to understand the relations between these different intuitions, constitutes the element of universality which is a necessary condition of all thinking.

We have already, in describing Mr. Russell's philosophy, met the concept under the name of 'universal', and traced the process by which Mr. Russell endeavoured to give an account of the Universe without the aid of universals. But Croce's concept, though in a sense performing the same function as the Realist's universal, is of a totally different character. The most important difference lies in the fact that for Croce the concept is mental and stands for no class of qualities in the external world. It is merely a moment or phase in thinking. As such it has three characteristics which must be carefully borne in mind. It is universal, expressive, and concrete; and it is these three characteristics, which we must now consider in turn, which distinguish the concept proper from its spurious imitation the 'pseudo concept or false concept', which, according to Croce, has led so many philosophers astray.

In ascribing universality to the pure concept Croce means to assert that the concept is present in every manifestation of life and reality, that is to say, of experience. Instances of concepts of such an entirely general character are quality, evolution, shape, and beauty. However trivial, minute, or abstract the experience we choose for our example, it must possess the characteristics of quality, shape, and beauty in some degree, however small: if it did not, there would be no means of distinguishing it from other experiences: it would be without form or properties; in short, it would not be real. Croce's way of expressing this is to say that the concept is immanent in every presentation of life or, more exactly, in every intuition or image which forms the material of thought. But, though immanent, the concept is also transcendent; that is to say, even if it were possible to collect together the whole mass of individual experiences taken in sum, these

experiences would not exhaust the concept; hence, though quality is always present in any and every manifestation of reality, it is always something more than the sum of its presentations.

As regards expressiveness, the concept is the expression of the logical activity, just as the image is the expression of the aesthetic activity. In order to be real a thought must have form: if it has no form it is not a thought; and the concept is that which gives form to the thought—that in virtue of which its form is what it is—in the same way as the image gives form to the intuition. The concept therefore is the formal expression of thought or of the logical activity.

Finally, the concept is concrete, by which Croce means that it is real. It is present in every moment of our experience; it is immanent in every intuition, and, since experience is, as we have seen, the only form of reality, we may conclude that whatever is real is also conceptual. It is the quality of concreteness which serves most of all to distinguish the concept from the pseudo concept. The pseudo concept is a class name for a number of existent entities or, in Croce's language, presentations which possess a common property. Examples of the pseudo concept are 'house', 'triangle', 'water', 'man'. Much philosophy has been concerned with the attempt to establish the status of these pseudo concepts, and in particular to determine the question whether they possess an existence which is independent of the classes of objects for which they stand. Croce answers this question in the negative. The pseudo concept 'house' has no existence in its own right apart from the sum total of all the individual houses which it represents; it is simply a class name, the product of a piece of mental shorthand, in the course of which mind abstracts from all existing houses certain qualities which they have in common, and catalogues them under the term 'house'; this term then serves as a symbol for any one house the thinker may choose to take of all the houses that actually exist.

The importance of the pseudo concept consists in the use which is made of it by the special sciences. The natural and mathematical sciences study the pseudo concept, just as logic studies the pure concept. And it is for this reason that Croce denominates the sciences abstract, as opposed to philosophy which is the one concrete science. Philosophers, and in particular Idealist philosophers, have often been accused of hostility to science. This accusation derives its plausibility from the fact that, while admitting the utility of the sciences and the importance of the results which they have achieved, Idealists deny that their objects are entirely real: they are rather abstractions from reality made for a special purpose. The conclusions of the sciences therefore, though possessing validity, possess validity of a very special order which holds within certain special limits, these limits being not the indefinite limits of reality as a whole, but those which have been arbitrarily constituted by the scientist's special selection from reality of his subject-matter. What is the basis of this contention?

For the Neo-Idealist, as we have seen, only mind is real. Experience is the insertion of mind in reality, and there is no reality apart from the experience of mind; there is therefore no 'that' which the mind experiences, in the sense of a 'that' which somehow subsists apart from the experience of it. Now it is precisely with such a 'that' that science deals. Science carves out from the concrete whole objects which it treats as real. It arranges these objects according to certain common properties which they appear to possess, and catalogues them under class names (Croce's pseudo concepts). Thus, arithmetic studies the properties of numbers, zoology the behaviour of animal life, psychology the structure of mind, physics the properties of heat and sound; and these objects, their relations, and the laws governing their occurrence are studied as though they were self-subsistent entities existing independently of experience. It is

assumed that these objects of scientific inquiry are real facts of everyday life, and that, for their study and comprehension, a consideration of the act of knowing, of which they really form part, is irrelevant: and the pseudo concepts triangle, flesh and bone, matter, electrons, &c., are formed for the express purpose of enabling them to be so studied and understood.

But a study of entities formed by abstraction from concrete reality must yield a type of truth which is only true within the limits, and subject to the conditions, which the initial abstraction from the real involves. The only study which can yield results which are entirely true is the study of that which is wholly and entirely real, namely, concrete mind. And just as philosophy is more real than science, so the pure concept studied by philosophy, being an actual moment in the life of mind and not an unreal abstraction from mind, possesses a reality which is greater than that of the pseudo concept.

By developing his notion of the pure concept Croce is enabled to take the two further steps which are requisite for the completion of his system. These consist in the establishment first of an experience beyond the experience of the individual, and secondly of the possibility of action.

The argument for the existence of Mind as a whole outside the individual experience with which we have been hitherto concerned is not easy to follow, and has seemed to many unconvincing. Croce's philosophy has often been charged not only with providing no escape from the position of Subjective Idealism, which asserts that the only things we can know are our own ideas, but even with a logical reduction of itself to Solipsism, the doctrine that our own mental states are the only things that exist in the Universe. Croce certainly invites criticism on this head, and, as we shall see at the end of this chapter, his position is not one which can be easily defended against these charges.

There is no doubt, however, that he does hold that the experi-

ence which philosophy studies is not in the long run individual experience, or at any rate not only such experience, but the universalized experience of mind as a whole, with which the individual's experience is continuous and of which it forms part. 'The consciousness which forms the object of philosophical inquiry is not that of the individual in so far as he is an individual, but the universal consciousness which is in any individual, the basis alike of his individuality and of that of others.' And the first link between the mind of the individual and mind as a whole is constituted by the concept.

The argument is briefly as follows. Intuitions without concepts are, to use an expressive Idealist term, 'blind'. They are sheer presentations with regard to whose nature and status we cannot make any assertion until we begin to think. Thinking means passing a judgement, and all judgements involve concepts. Now a judgement is something by means of which we can communicate with other people: even if they dissent from a particular judgement of ours, they will understand it: the judgement in fact forms a common ground between us. But, if my experience is entirely individual and particular, this common ground could not exist: I could not, for instance, give a notion of colour to a congenitally blind man: there would be no basis of appeal, no means of bringing my consciousness into touch with his. Now concepts are definitely regarded as being common to different minds. The concept of quality, for instance, is a presupposition not only of my experience, but of the experience of others also. Thus, it is by means of the conceptual and not of the intuitional elements in my experience that I am able to communicate with them. But the concept of quality could not be a common element in a number of experiences, such that it affords a basis of understanding between minds, unless those minds and experiences were themselves aspects of a universal mind which is immanent in each of them. The concept, therefore, is a moment in experience as

a whole, and its universality, and the universality of the experience to which it belongs, are demonstrated by the fact that it is not exhausted by any number of individual experiences, but, though present in each, is something more than all.

There is another important argument by which Croce establishes the existence of a universal experience. This argument is derived from his conception of History, to which we have already referred. The essence of mental activity is, as we have seen, 'History'. A mind is not something which has a history, in the sense of being something outside the historical events which occur to it; it is its own History, and it is a History in which the present is determined by the past and determines the future in one continuous process. The History of every individual mental process is therefore illimitable, and is identical with the mental process which it records. But by a similar process of reasoning all reality which is mental, that is to say, all reality, is equally History. The reality therefore with which the mind has to deal, or, to use Croce's language, which it generates for itself, is History; in other words, reality or experience as a whole is History. But we have already seen that the individual mind is identical with History: therefore the individual mind is continuous with, and in a sense identical with, reality or experience as a whole.

B. *The Practical Activity.* We have no space to do more than briefly touch upon Croce's conception of ethics. Croce is here concerned with the second form of the activity of mind, namely, that of willing or acting, which is the function of the practical activity, as knowing is of the theoretical. We use the words willing or acting advisedly, since, for Croce, there is no distinction between a volition and the action which issues from it. Just as there is no such thing as an unexpressed intuition, intuition being expression, so there are no volitions which are not also actions. The volition is in fact not something which may

or may not be followed by 'movements of the legs and arms; these movements are the volition'. Thus, even the smallest volition will be found to be already putting the organism in motion and producing so-called external effects. It is equally impossible to imagine an action which is not willed. Whatever is not action is mere mechanical movement, and this is a pseudo concept, an abstraction from the concrete whole which is action.

The second or practical form of the mind's activity is logically dependent on the first or theoretical, since, although knowledge exists for the sake of action, we may know without willing or acting, whereas we cannot will or act without previously knowing. Like the first, the second form is divided into two subgrades, the economical and the ethical, the economical being based upon the concept of the useful, and the ethical upon the concept of the good. Here again we find the second subgrade logically dependent on the first, which is independent of the second. By this distinction Croce means that in the activity of the first subgrade the objects of our actions are presented to us solely as the attainment of what is useful to us as individuals, as the satisfaction of our own personal desires. In the second moment these individual needs and satisfactions are merged in those of others, so that the concept of goodness, which is no more than the concept of utility universalized, is now seen to require the same kind of action in relation to the needs and desires of others as we should pursue in relation to our own. Having made this distinction, however, it is important to point out that every action embodies the forms both of utility and of goodness. There is no such thing as a purely economic, self-regarding, individual act, just as there is no such thing as a purely ethical, other-regarding, universal act. 'When we seek', says Croce, 'to recognize the purely moral form of conduct, we find at once that it entails the other form we wish to disregard, because our action, even in its universal significance, must always be concrete and individually determined.' Egoism

and altruism, therefore, are not two opposed conceptions, but are two logically connected and indissoluble moments of experience, such that every action can in fact be said to be both egoistic and altruistic in character.

In summing up Croce's theory of knowledge we may say that he regards mind or experience as the only thing which possesses reality. This mind or experience is essentially an activity possessing two moments called respectively the pure intuition and the pure concept. These two moments do not stand in a temporal relation of before and after, nor is it possible for one form of activity to function without the other; they are indissolubly united by a synthesis, which is not achieved as the result of experience, but which is the necessary condition of there being experience: the synthesis is in fact given in experience to begin with, and the two moments are only extracted from it by later reflection. This means that the intuition and the concept, though distinct, together form a unity: the intuition without the concept would be blind, the concept without the intuition empty, while each would be unreal. Hence experience may be termed a unity of distincts.

We must now consider the further developments made in the theory of Neo-Idealism by Giovanni Gentile.

III. *Giovanni Gentile.* Gentile stands to Croce in the relation of a pupil to the master he has outstripped. While he has done much to popularize the theory of Neo-Idealism as Croce's colleague, his later work consists of a development which carries to their logical limits the theories with which Croce is identified.

The most complete statement of Gentile's philosophy is contained in two volumes entitled respectively *A Summary of Pedagogy* and *The Theory of Mind as Pure Act.* Of these works the latter is a published course of lectures, and has recently been translated into English by Professor Wildon Carr. Gentile's line of development is sufficiently obvious. Croce begins with an experience

which he insists is a unified whole, the two moments or activities with their subgrades of which experience is a synthesis being presumed not to impair the oneness of the mind in which they arise. But these moments or articulations of experience are not the result of the mind's reflection upon or deduction about itself; they are assumed or given to begin with, being in fact distinctions which are logically involved in the fact that experience is what it is. The mind, however, cannot at one and the same time be a unity and the ground of a fourfold multiplicity. If it is a unity, it cannot generate from within itself distinctions which are as real as the unity; while, if the distinctions are not generated but given to begin with, then mind is not and never was a unity.

But if mind cannot be at once a unity and the single source of orderly multiplicity, we must give up either Croce's grades and moments or else the unity of experience. What Gentile does is to give up the former. He starts with a mind which is a complete unity, retains the unity throughout, and from that unity extracts whatever multiplicity there is.

This mind or experience, as it is called, is for Gentile literally the only thing in the Universe: in fact the Universe is mind or spirit.

It is clear that the difficulty of such a position will lie in the attempt to account for apparent multiplicity. We start with a reality which is one spirit or mind; this spirit cancels and supersedes all oppositions and distinctions; it makes and unmakes everything that there is, including itself; and from this starting-point Gentile has by some means to show how the whole wealth of concrete detail which constitutes our everyday world, with its various degrees and stages of being, is developed.

How is this development effected? We are precluded in the first place from regarding the content of our knowledge, the actual things we know, either as a collection of objects set over against mind and existing independently of it, or as a composite something which, though it determines and is determined by

mind, being indeed a necessary condition of the mind's knowing at all, is, nevertheless, something other than the mind which moulds or fashions it. Knowledge, that is to say, is not on this view an external relationship between mind and a world which is unaffected by being known, nor a relationship in which mind forms for itself the objects of its knowledge from material which is essentially unknowable. We have already seen, in discussing Croce, on what grounds these more familiar conceptions of the knowledge relationship are rejected, and they are grounds which Gentile shares. Since, then, experience is the only thing in the world, it is clear that we must look for the object of experience, an object which is only falsely separated from it for the purposes of abstract argument, within experience itself. The question is, then, does experience contain within itself an example of the so-called knowledge relationship? The answer is that it does, and that it does so most obviously in self-consciousness. In self-consciousness mind is both knowing subject and known object; it can and must postulate itself as acting under each of these two phases while still remaining one with itself. In self-consciousness it is the same mind which is at the same time both knower and known. Nor is it true to say that the subject is a piece of mind, such that there is another piece of mind left over which has no part in the subject and is, for example, object. On the contrary, mind throws itself wholly into each phase, so that the subject is just as much and just as completely mind as the object. Thus mind separates within itself these two phases or stages of its being, and permits them, as it were, to develop along their own lines, while remaining itself wholly present in each phase. Self-consciousness is therefore a synthesis or uniting of two distinguishable moments or phases, in one of which mind appears as subject, in the other as object.

The fact that the experience of which we are most fully and clearly aware, the experience which is most indubitably real, is

a unity containing within itself distinguishable aspects, is of the utmost importance when we endeavour to develop the apparent multiplicity of the Universe out of Gentile's all-pervasive mind or spirit.

For Gentile's main thesis is that the relationship of which we are most indubitably aware in self-consciousness is that in terms of which we must interpret reality as a whole. Mind, being the only thing in the Universe, must of necessity beget its own objects, and all consciousness, that is to say, all reality, is therefore of the type of self-consciousness.

Art is the study of mind as consciousness of the subject; religion is the study of mind as consciousness of the object. Art alone must, even in its fullest development, remain merely subjective, while religion divorced from art is embarked upon an endless and objectless quest. But just as subject and object are merged in the synthesis of self-consciousness, so religion and art are merged in Philosophy, which integrates both and is therefore the supreme type of concrete reality. In Gentile's words, 'Philosophy is the final form in which the others are taken up and reconciled, and represents the Truth, the plenary actuality, and the Spirit'. In this conception, and not in this alone, Gentile's philosophy constitutes a return to the position of Hegel, in those very respects in which Croce had rejected Hegel.

This brings us to Gentile's most striking notion, a notion which to those who do not share the presuppositions of the Neo-Idealist is as startling as it is striking. This is his conception of the philosopher as the maker of reality. Philosophy, as we have seen, is the study of reality, that is, the study of concrete mind: it is the process by which mind makes itself know itself. But, in coming to know itself by thinking about itself, mind is adding to itself and so making the self which it knows: for thought after all is nothing but the continuous process of its own creation, and in thinking about thought we are creating it. Now thought

about thought is philosophy; and philosophy is therefore not only a continuation of the thought about which it philosophizes but identical with it. It is therefore identical with reality. Thus the philosopher makes reality; in philosophizing we create what is. And, since self-consciousness is, as we have seen, a process in which mind generates or actualizes its own objects, and since philosophy also studies the objects which itself as thought has created, it follows that philosophy is the supreme form of self-consciousness, the whole and sole Reality.

Knowledge of reality, then, is knowledge of thought, and in thinking we create the thought we think about. 'Nothing is,' as Gentile puts it, 'but thinking makes it so in the act of its own self-formation.'

Since, moreover, we have found that the experience of which we are most clearly aware is in its essence an example of self-consciousness or mental generation of objects known, and since there is no source other than mind from which the objects of mind could be generated, it follows that all experience of any kind is of the type of self-consciousness, and that experience as a whole is, in fact, a self-contained, self-begetting reality of which our own experience is a pattern in miniature. Each individual experience therefore, however different it may seem from its fellows, must repeat in some degree the structure of experience as a whole, while, to carry the argument a step farther, it only is what it is because of its participation in experience as a whole. Experience as a whole is thus continuously and completely immanent in each individual experience, just as each individual experience was completely immanent, wholly there, as it were, in the subjective and objective phases of itself. Thus the distinction between individual and universal experience breaks down, and the mind with which we are acquainted is seen to be only an aspect of that all-embracing, ever-active mind which is, or rather which is creating, the Universe as a whole. Reality is therefore compact

of experiences which, however apparently distinct, reflect each in its own manner the structure of experience as a whole.

Difficult and highly abstract as Gentile's system is, it is nevertheless possible to regard it in the light of a perfectly logical development from the postulate, 'Experience is the one thing of whose reality we are assured; therefore the rest of reality must be in the likeness of experience'. Once mind begins to conceive of reality after the pattern of itself, it will quickly come to think of that pattern and consequently of reality in the terms of what it regards as its own highest activity, namely, Philosophy. And since in Philosophy mind speculates about itself and in so doing creates the object it studies, it follows that the Universe as a whole must be one gigantic reproduction of this self-generating mental activity. The reality of our self-consciousness, then, is that in the light of which we must interpret everything that is.

And, in truth, this position is not as paradoxical as it may at first sight appear. It may be readily admitted that experience is that of whose existence we are most indubitably certain, and that self-consciousness is that type of experience which is at once most constant and most palpable. Is it not reasonable, then, that when Mind comes to consider the nature of the Universe, it should liken it to itself, and in particular to its own highest and clearest activity? It is true that the farther we move from the centre of experience which is self-consciousness, the more difficult the application of Gentile's principle becomes. Yet, even in the most remote regions of mental speculation, we can never light upon anything which is such that our knowledge of it contradicts the view that it is but another aspect of consciousness begotten by consciousness itself. Whatever enters into knowledge must, according to Gentile's view, form part of the knowledge into which it enters; and, as we are never aware of any external source of that knowledge—of a source, that is to say, which does not itself enter into knowledge and form part of it—it follows naturally

enough that the so-called object of knowledge is begotten by the mind which knows it.

Hence we arrive at Gentile's fundamental position that experience is a free self-determining activity, the author both of its world and of itself, separating itself into distinguishable phases in which all that is lives, moves, and has its being.

IV. *Criticism.* As we follow Gentile's working out of the presuppositions which he shares with Croce, it is, I think, fairly evident that, in his refusal to accept the position in which Croce is prepared to rest, he is only developing the logic of the Neo-Idealist standpoint with a somewhat greater thoroughness and consistency. Croce's doctrine of moments and distincts is, to put the matter bluntly, little more than an elaborate attempt to have it both ways. He asserts that experience is a unity, yet he requires it to develop a multiplicity. He insists that experience is active and developing, yet he equally insists that experience necessarily involves the distinction between intuition and concept as its initial presupposition. But, as Gentile points out, if the experience develops, the distinctions between the forms of experience cannot be assumed to be there to begin with. If, however, they are there to begin with, if in fact the determinations of the forms of the spirit are static and not developed, then the whole doctrine of the unity of mind must be abandoned.

To return for a moment to Hegel, it is relevant to point out that his synthesis was a synthesis not of distincts but of opposites. Now a synthesis of opposites gives rise to contradictions and antinomies which lead to new syntheses, which continue to grow in a progressive series until the Absolute or all-embracing synthesis is reached. A synthesis of opposites therefore contains the seed and principle of development within itself. A synthesis of distincts, however, does not generate the same need for further development. It contains no contradictions : it develops no logical antinomies. The distincts therefore remain a static articulation, a pattern

which is, so to speak, given within the framework of the real, and the real has no inducement to seek a more complete unity by transcending and merging the distincts by further development.

The above criticism of Croce's position is significant because it indicates the basis on which Gentile founds the developments of which his own philosophy consists. It requires, however, a knowledge of the system of Hegel for its proper comprehension, and is a criticism which falls wholly within the framework of the Idealist assumptions. For those who do not share these assumptions, for those who do not believe that experience, thought, spirit, call it what you will, is the only form of reality, the approach to Philosophy is so radically different, that it is difficult to bring to the consideration of the Neo-Idealist position the intelligent comprehension which fruitful criticism requires. To criticize a philosophy so different in its assumptions, its outlook, and its reasoning from that of Realism or of Pragmatism, is like criticizing the mathematics of an inhabitant of a four-dimensional Universe or the musical taste of a man from Mars.

It is nevertheless possible, while accepting the presuppositions of Croce's and Gentile's philosophy, to point to one or two difficulties that suggest themselves in connexion with its development.

(*a*) In the first place it is open to question whether the efforts made both by Croce and by Gentile to escape the implications of Subjective Idealism, or even of Solipsism, are successful.

In this respect Neo-Idealism is at a disadvantage as compared with orthodox Hegelianism. The latter, while admitting that there is nothing which transcends experience as a whole, insisted that there is much which transcends immediate experience. Immediate experience is partial and finite, and, for this very reason, it not only fails to grasp the true nature of reality as a whole, but is itself not entirely real, since the whole of reality is implied in it. And if we ask in what way the whole of reality is implied, the answer is that an analysis of immediate experience

shows that, taken as it apparently is, isolated, that is to say, from the rest of experience, it is full of contradictions and anomalies which can only be resolved on the assumption that it is part of something greater. The whole is therefore regarded as being immanent in each individual experience, since, apart from the whole, it is impossible to explain how the individual experience comes to be what it is. Thus orthodox Hegelianism is able to rebut the charge of Solipsism by means of its doctrine of the whole as immanent in immediate experience and necessarily presupposed in the analysis of it.

But Neo-Idealism has no such resource. For it, nothing is transcendent. There is nothing behind or beyond immediate experience for the simple reason that immediate experience generates whatever is. But it is not true to say that immediate experience is aware of itself as participating in a universal experience whose structure it reproduces down to the smallest detail. (Croce, as a matter of fact, believes that this participation is a fact, but, if it is so, it is not a fact which is given in experience, and on his own premises Croce has no right to believe in anything except the immediately given. Experience as a whole or universal experience remains therefore like Locke's substance, or the physical object of the Critical Realists, something which we never know, but which we assume to underlie and to condition what we do know. This assumption we shall be prepared to make, if we already accept independently of it the position of the Neo-Idealists, but it certainly does not constitute a support for that position; while, if we cannot make this assumption, we are left with our own experience as absolutely the only thing existent in the Universe.)

(*b*) We have already seen how Gentile convicted the unity of Croce's mind (or experience) of inability to account for the multiplicity of his forms and moments. But if we start with the unity of individual experience and insist on it throughout, how is it at all possible to account for the seeming multiplicity of the world

we know? Diversity and plurality can only develop out of unity in virtue of some initial potentiality for diversity and plurality latent in the unity. But if the unity contains the possibility of developed difference, it is not really a unity. If, on the other hand, we attempt to write off the appearance of difference as mere illusion due to partial vision, the difficulty remains, for the task of making a *real* unity generate an *apparent* diversity is not less than that of accounting for its generation of a *real* diversity. Unity can in fact no more account for error than for diversity.

The world of matter, says Croce, is abstracted by mind from the concrete experience of mind. For what purpose, by what means, unless (1) mind contains within itself as a feature of reality the disposition to make this particular abstraction and no other, and (2) reality is initially qualified by the potentiality not only for this division but for just *this* division and no other? But, if this is the case, the division of experience into mind and matter is not purely arbitrary, but is conditioned by something in reality which makes the division not only possible but necessary.

But, in any event, if we once abandon the Hegelian Absolute, whose manifestation in different individuals may be conceived adequately to explain the richness and diversity of the world we know, how can the common faculty or capacity of thinking and experiencing individuals be made the source of all the variety of nature and of history? It is not science but the doctrine of Neo-Idealism itself which seems to merit condemnation as an unreal abstraction from the facts, ignoring as it does every element in experience except the activity of the experiencing mind.

(*c*) And finally, how are we to account for this activity? Returning once more to the system of Hegel, we find the conception of a developing activity in mental processes springing direct from the tendency of the whole to express itself in individual manifestations, and from the contradictions to which these partial expressions give rise. The effort to transcend these contradictions

by returning to the whole explains the element of progressive movement or of development in the Universe. For the Neo-Idealist, however, there is nothing but this movement: there is no end to which it tends, there is no source from which it rises. The Spirit is defined as 'an infinite possibility overflowing into infinite actuality', and, since we are expressly forbidden to regard this process as a process *ad infinitum* ('The progress *ad infinitum*, never reaching its goal, is not a progress; and the idea of approximation is an illusion'), we fall back on the conception of circular movement. But our question still persists, 'Why does it move?' If there is no systematic totality to move to, and no clash of contradictions to move from, the fact of activity or movement which, we are told, is the very essence of the real, remains an enigma.

The above remarks will serve to indicate the nature and direction of the criticism which an orthodox Hegelian would be disposed to bring against the Neo-Idealist developments. But for those who do not accept the presuppositions of Idealism the points at issue will seem abstract and meaningless enough. It is important, therefore, that the reader should make up his mind at the outset on the merits of the controversy between Realists and Idealists, before deciding in favour of one or another of the various branches of Idealism offered by modern Philosophy.

4

Pragmatism

Introduction. Pragmatism is the name given to a number of different, though allied, tendencies in modern thought. These tendencies originated chiefly in America, the name Pragmatism being first applied to them in 1878 by a writer named C. S. Peirce. The works of William James are Pragmatic in character, and the widespread attention which James's writings secured is largely

responsible for the considerable influence exercised by Pragmatism in modern thought. The Pragmatic method has been further elaborated by Professor Dewey in the United States and by Dr. Schiller in Great Britain. Dr. Schiller is also mainly responsible for the doctrine of Humanism, which may be described as an offshoot of Pragmatism, and which seeks to apply to metaphysics the methods followed by Pragmatism in logic.

Thus Pragmatism is not so much a definite and compact philosophical theory as a characteristic of a philosophical attitude. This attitude expresses itself in the view that personal considerations affect all knowing, and that logic, and even metaphysics, are therefore dependent upon psychology. The view that allowances must always be made for the personal factor in any account of knowledge is maintained in opposition to the traditional theory of knowledge, which holds that the cognitive faculty can be studied in isolation and that a man's view of the Universe, even if it is to some extent coloured by the desires he entertains and the purposes he wishes to fulfil, does not necessarily depend upon such considerations.

Writers on Pragmatism may thus claim an affinity with the Greek philosopher Protagoras, whose famous axiom, 'Man is the measure of all things', is invoked to give the much-needed sanction of antiquity to a doctrine which, until quite recent years, tended to occupy the rôle of the *enfant terrible* of modern philosophy.

Although, as already stated, Pragmatism does not constitute a complete philosophical creed, and thinkers who employ the Pragmatic method may in theory hold the most widely differing views with regard to the nature of the Universe and of the mind that knows it, there is as a matter of fact a considerable measure of agreement among Pragmatists with regard to certain fundamental propositions.

These propositions may be classified under three main heads,

psychological, logical, and metaphysical. I propose briefly to outline the Pragmatist position under each of these three heads before considering the objections which have been urged against it.

I. *Psychology.* The Pragmatist holds a special theory with regard to the nature of our experience and the manner in which it comes to us, which can only be understood in relation to the so-called 'atomistic psychology' against which it is largely a reaction.

The atomistic psychology, which was common to the English philosophers Locke and Berkeley, seeks to give an account of exactly what it is that happens when we perceive things. According to this psychology, the objects of perception consist of a number of distinct and separate sensations or impressions. When we are brought into contact with what is called a physical object, a table for instance, the table produces certain sensations upon our sense organs. These sensations are conveyed by the nerves to the brain, where we become conscious of them as ideas, and it is these sensations, or rather these ideas, each of which is a distinct and separate entity, which are known by the mind and which form the subject-matter of all our knowledge. Thus, when we think we perceive the table, what we in fact experience is a series of isolated sensations, such as hardness, smoothness, coolness, squareness, brownness, and so forth; we never perceive the table itself.

The implications of this psychology, when logically developed, speedily lead, as we have already seen,[1] to the position of Solipsism. In the first place, if it be insisted that we never do know the table and never can know the table, but only know the impressions produced by the table, we cannot know any of the qualities or properties which the table possesses. Thus we cannot know that it has the property of causing our sensations; nor can we even know that the table exists. Secondly, if, in Hume's words, 'All

[1] See chapter on Modern Realism, pp. 7 and 8.

our distinct perceptions are distinct existences, among which the mind never perceives any real connexion', the constructional work performed by mind when it informs us that the sensation of hardness and the sensation of brownness both spring from and are caused by the same table is sheer guess-work, for which reality, as we know it, provides no justification.

Kant endeavoured to solve these difficulties by endowing the mind with an apparatus of faculties, which performed the function of welding together the chaotic material presented to us by our senses into a coherent and intelligible whole. He arranged our sensations according to categories by means of his famous Principles of Understanding, and endeavoured to show that mind was acting legitimately in constructing its experience in this way. But what right had Kant, asks the Pragmatist, to legitimize the mind's impudence in tampering with its sensations? Why should the sensations conform to the categories, and why should the constructional process, by means of which connexions are interposed between the originally unconnected, result in anything but a complete falsification of reality? Rightly or wrongly, then, the Pragmatist refuses to take shelter in the elaborate structure erected by Kant, and insists that, if we accept the premises from which Hume starts, there is no way of escape from the scepticism in which he finishes.

But, we may put the question, is it after all necessary to accept these premises? And the first characteristic of the Pragmatist position consists in the assertion that it is not. So far in fact from the atomistic psychology being true, it is, according to the Pragmatist, the exact reverse of the truth. Locke had said that experience is composed of distinct sensations between which the mind interposes connexions. William James retorted by asserting that experience is a continuous whole in which the mind interposes distinctions. 'Consciousness', in James's words, 'does not appear to itself chopped up in bits.' On the contrary, it is a continuum

in which the relations between the different sensations are experienced just as truly and just as directly as the sensations related.

Whereas Locke's analysis of the proposition 'the egg is on the table' asserts an isolated sensation of an egg, an isolated sensation of a table, and a piece of mental jugglery which invented the relation '*on*' between them, William James's analysis asserts first a continuous stream or flux in which the egg, the on, and the table are all alike experienced as an indistinguishable whole, and secondly a piece of mental activity which subsequently separates the egg from the table, and then postulates a distinct relation of *on-ness* which subsists between them. Thus, according to the Pragmatist view of perception, the essence of mental activity is to break up and separate that which is originally a continuous whole. This separation is effected by means of what are called mental concepts, such as the concept of '*on-ness*', and it is effected for the purposes of action. A world of experience which was a vast indeterminate flow would prove difficult, if not impossible, to live in, and it is necessary therefore, in order that we may act, that we should separate the flow of experience into eggs and tables. Hence all our mental processes bear a definite relation to action. This brings us at once to a new and important point.

In analysing experience the mind is active. Not only does it eliminate but it selects, not only does it select but it adds, and it selects and adds in accordance with the interests of the perceiver and in relation to the purposes which he has in view. Thus all analysis is a form of choice and is conditioned by will. What is real for us consists of a reality which we ourselves have made, and we have made it of such and such a kind because it is precisely that kind of reality which best serves our purpose.

Thus the Pragmatist psychology emphasizes two important points:

(*a*) Experience is a continuum which is broken up and analysed into objects and their relations by the activity of the mind.

(*b*) This analysis is not arbitrary, but is dictated by the interests, the purposes, and, we may add, the temperament of the perceiver. The establishment of the important principle of the influence of 'usefulness' or 'purpose' in conditioning perception lies at the basis of the Pragmatist view of logic, which springs direct from an extension of the same principle.

If what we believe to be real depends upon what it is useful for us to believe to be real, may not the same principle determine what we believe to be true?

II. *Logic.* The problem of truth and error is the central problem of Pragmatism, and it is upon the answer it gives to this problem that Pragmatism must stand or fall.

The first suggestion of this answer is to be found in William James's famous book, *The Will to Believe.* The thesis which he advocates in this work is briefly as follows: In certain cases of religious and moral perplexity it is right to adopt one of two contending alternatives, even if there is no evidence that it is the true one. William James appears tacitly to assume that there is no evidence for the truth of religion; nevertheless, he insists that we must either believe or disbelieve what it asserts.

'Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds.' When such an option is presented, we do, he thinks, in fact decide to adopt one of the two alternatives on emotional grounds: we adopt, in short, the belief that gives the greatest emotional satisfaction. It follows that, since different people find different beliefs emotionally satisfying, they ought to entertain different beliefs.

We are now in sight of the fully developed Pragmatist theory of truth. Starting from the proposition, 'people hold beliefs to be true which are emotionally satisfying', we have only to take the further step which consists in asserting 'a true belief is one

which is emotionally satisfying', or, as it is usually put, 'a true belief is one which works', and we have arrived at the Pragmatist doctrine of the meaning of truth. How does Pragmatism justify the taking of this further step?

The words true and false are only applied to beliefs with regard to which a question has arisen. When the question does arise, 'Is it true or is it false?' we answer it in some such way as this: 'If the belief furthers the purpose which led us to ask the question, it is true; if not, false.' Hence the meaning of the words true or false is the furthering or not furthering of the purpose which led to the asking of the question, 'Is such and such a belief true?'

Now it is clear that the extent to which a belief furthers purpose can only be ascertained by experience. Hence the truth of a belief is not immediately established: if, however, we proceed upon the assumption that a belief is true, and find that this assumption is warranted by the consequences which follow the adoption of the belief, if, in short, the belief works in practice, then it becomes progressively more and more true; so that the truth of a belief which has stood the test of experience over a long course of years, such as the belief in the law of gravitation, becomes *for all practical purposes* established. Since all experience is finite, no belief can be said to be absolutely true; but this fact need not disturb us. Absolute truth is a figment of the logicians: it is of no importance in practice.

Every belief, then, is a truth claim. By acting upon the belief we test it, and if the consequences which follow from adopting it are good, if they promote the purpose in hand and so have a valuable effect upon life, the truth claim of the belief is validated. Hence we make our own truth just as we make our own reality, the truth of the beliefs we hold and the reality of the objects we perceive being equally relative to our purposes.

'The true', says William James, 'is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief and good too for

definite assignable reasons,' and he sums up the whole theory as follows: 'The "true", to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of thinking, just as the "right" is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole, of course.'

At this point the inevitable objection arises; although we may agree that true beliefs usually work and false beliefs do not, it is not the fact that a belief works that makes it true. What we mean by a true belief is a belief that squares with the evidence. Scientific laws are held to be true because they conform with all the known evidence and only for so long as they conform; this is clear, if for no other reason, from the fact that when fresh evidence is discovered with which the law does not conform, the law is modified or another law is substituted in its place.

The theory that a true belief is one which corresponds with fact is of great antiquity in Philosophy, and is one of the few instances of an authoritatively held philosophical belief which accords with the presumptions of common sense. But the Pragmatist has little difficulty in disposing of this theory to his own satisfaction.

It is clearly the intention of every belief, says the Pragmatist, to correspond with reality: no belief would in fact ever be entertained unless it were thought to be true of reality. But, unless we can prove that a belief does so correspond, we must hold that all beliefs are equally true. Can we, then, prove the fact of correspondence between a belief and reality? In order that the proof may be effected the reality must somehow be known independently of the belief, so that the two may be compared and found to agree. But if we do know the reality directly, what is the point of asserting a belief about it and claiming truth for the belief? If we do not know the reality directly, and, as a matter of fact, we do not, how can we know that the belief corresponds with it? Hence the correspondence cannot be made out. A true thought and a false thought then, on this view, are

each equally true, since each claims to correspond with reality, and in neither case can the claim be made good.

Another time-honoured philosophical theory as to the nature of truth, the coherence theory, fares little better at the hands of the Pragmatists. The coherence theory asserts that a belief is true if it coheres or is consistent with the general structure of our beliefs. Upholders of this theory are usually Idealist philosophers, who regard the distinction between individual minds as one which cannot in the long run be maintained. For coherence with our own beliefs, then, we may substitute, in our definition of the meaning of truth, coherence with the structure of mind as a whole, or, in the language adopted by Idealists, with the experience of the Absolute.

Against this theory the Pragmatist brings objections of the same type as those which are urged against the correspondence theory. In the first place it is possible to imagine systems of completely coherent beliefs which have no relation to reality: mathematical systems of this kind, which are perfectly consistent with themselves, may be and have been constructed; a world of coherent dreams might be similarly constructed. On the coherence theory, then, we should be compelled to regard these systems as true, and we should be compelled to do so even though the imagined world or system had no counterpart in reality.

If, on the other hand, it is urged that the structure of belief as a whole, the experience of the Absolute in fact, provides an outside criterion by means of which to test the truth of individual beliefs, we are in the same difficulty as before; for as we do not know the mind of the Absolute, we cannot tell whether any particular belief is or is not coherent with it. The Pragmatist insists, then, that the ordinary philosophical theories of truth provide no practical criterion by means of which to distinguish what is true from what is false.

Such a criterion is, however, essential, unless we are content

to hold that the truth of every belief is constituted by the mere fact that the belief is entertained; and this criterion Pragmatism claims to supply when it asserts that the truth of every belief must be tested by the practical consequences which follow if we adopt it.

As for the truths of science, which appeared to involve the adoption of the correspondence theory of truth, they are in point of fact established by the very method which Pragmatism advocates. Scientific laws are not in reality laws at all. A scientific law prima facie claims to embrace not only all the phenomena that have occurred in the past, but all the phenomena of the same type which can possibly occur in the future. But since the future is unknown, we cannot tell that a scientific law, however well it has worked in the past, will necessarily hold good in the future: hence the so-called laws of science are properly to be regarded as hypotheses or postulates. A postulate is a man-made hypothesis which purports to explain all the facts known at the time. It is a product of free choice, dependent upon the will and modifiable by the will. Having formed a postulate the scientist looks round for facts to support it. If the process of selection from the stream of experience produces facts which verify the postulate, the postulate may be said to have worked, and its claim to truth is thereby enhanced. If the facts reject the postulate, it is modified or abandoned. Now all scientific laws are postulates of this kind. Originally formed to fit the facts known at the time, they became progressively truer as more and more facts are found to conform to them. Thus no scientific law is either finally or absolutely true: in the words of Sir J. J. Thomson, it 'is a policy, not a creed', and its truth, which is continually subject to review, is tested by the consequences which attend its application to reality, and progressively validated or invalidated by the results of the test.

The laws of logic are treated from a similar point of view. The sustained criticism which Pragmatists have brought to bear

upon the structure of Intellectualist logic is indeed so characteristic a feature of the theory we are considering, that, although it belongs to the negative rather than to the positive side of Pragmatism, our account would be incomplete if it failed to indicate its general character.

Intellectualist logic, it is alleged, is based upon the premise that thought can be disinterested: that is to say, it involves the assumption that our reason can function independently of our will, our purposes, and our desires. It is held that when reason functions in this way, and only when it functions in this way, it can give us correct information about reality and arrives at results which must necessarily and always be true of reality. The operation of disinterested reason proceeds according to certain formulae. Of these the best known is the formula of the syllogism, since it is chiefly by means of the syllogism that we arrive at new truth. The syllogism consists of a major premise in the form of a general statement, such as 'all men are mortal', a minor premise consisting of a particular statement such as 'Socrates is a man', and a conclusion 'therefore Socrates is mortal' which is said to follow from the two premises and to constitute a statement which is both new and true.

The Pragmatist's criticism of the syllogism, which is typical of his general attitude to Intellectualist logic, consists simply in pointing out that if the conclusion follows it is not new, and that if it is new it does not follow. Thus, if the major premise 'all men are mortal' is formulated after a consideration of all known instances of men in the Universe it is false, since it excludes men like Elijah and the Struldbrugs. If, however, Elijah and the Struldbrugs are excluded from the scope of the major premise, either (1) because they are mythical, or (2) because they do not belong to the class of men, the resultant position is either (1) that the conclusion simply states the mortality of a man whose case must have already been considered and approved as that of a bona-

fide man before the major premise could be formulated, i.e. the conclusion is superfluous, or (2) that by definition we exclude immortal men from the category of men, and are therefore simply committing ourselves to a tautology in affirming the mortality of Socrates.

If, then, we insist, as the Intellectualists do, that our conclusion must be both logically determined and absolutely true, it follows that our conclusion cannot be new; whereupon the Pragmatist appropriately retorts, 'Then why bother to reach it?' He then proceeds to point out that thought only occurs in practice when the thinker believes that by reasoning he *can* arrive at something new. Hence practical thought is purposive: it is conditioned by the necessity of arriving at a conclusion, and this conclusion must possess two characteristics; it must be new and it must apply to reality. In practice, then, it appears that just in so far as a conclusion is new, it is not logically determined. A new conclusion involves a definite mental jump: it is a risk, a piece of guess-work on the part of the mind, of which the only justification is that the conclusion works. Hence reasoning, according to the Pragmatist, is relative and provisional; relative in the sense that it is undertaken with a definite object to serve a definite purpose, provisional in the sense that it is always liable to be overturned by a sudden failure to apply to new circumstances.

The logic of the Intellectualists is of necessity barren and academic, since it only attains to certainty at the cost of novelty, and only conforms to the demands of reason because it fails to conform to the facts of reality.

Reasoning, then, cannot in practice be divorced from purpose; and the truth of all laws, whether of science, of mathematics, or of logic, is only established by the consequences which attend their adoption.

III. *Metaphysics.* The metaphysics of Pragmatism need not detain us long. In the strict sense, indeed, there is no Pragmatist

metaphysic, since the Pragmatic method admits in theory of any Metaphysic. The conception of reality which Dr. Schiller has elaborated in his *Studies in Humanism*, a conception to which Professor Dewey has also subscribed, does, however, in a very important sense, follow from the Pragmatic theory of truth, and may justly claim to be the metaphysic which that theory requires.

While chiefly influenced and determined by the Pragmatic theory of truth, Dr. Schiller's conception springs in part from a second source. As we have seen, marked emphasis is placed by Pragmatism upon the influence of the will in perception: we carve out of the flux of reality the facts that interest us by means of concepts formed by mind for that purpose; and, although we cannot altogether deny the existence of a certain brute substance which is the subject-matter of this perpetual vivisection, the substance of reality is unknown and remote, while the facts which are known are, so to speak, dressed up and 'faked' for our delectation by the mere circumstance of our perceiving them.

Thus the act of perception, which alters the fact perceived, in a very real sense creates it. All knowing is relative to doing, and that which in point of fact determines whether a fact gets known is the suitability or non-suitability of the fact for the purposes of our action. And, since our knowledge of the fact brings the fact into existence for the first time as a separate constituent of reality, everything that is known is affected by the fact that we know it: no fact therefore is independent of our knowledge of it. This conclusion accords well enough with the Pragmatic theory of knowledge, for, if all knowing is for the purposes of action, our knowledge of a fact necessarily involves our acting upon the fact known. It is only disinterested knowledge, whose existence, as we have seen, the Pragmatist denies, that could be conceived of as not altering or affecting that which it knows.

The conclusion is also in complete agreement with the Pragmatic theory of truth: it reinforces it and is reinforced by it.

How is this agreement effected? Belief in a fact, as we have seen, alters the fact. If the belief alters the fact in harmony with our wishes, then the belief works and becomes, according to the Pragmatic theory of truth, a true belief: the fact is accordingly a real fact. If, however, the belief in the fact alters the fact in such a way as to be inharmonious with some of our wishes, the belief in the fact has not completely worked, and is, therefore, replaced by a modified belief which alters the fact in some other way. If the modified belief produces satisfactory consequences, the modified belief is *ipso facto* truer than the original belief, and the fact formed by the modified belief is therefore more real than the original fact. Thus reality is continually being made just as truth is continually being made, the essential factor in the creation of truth and reality alike being the ability of the belief which is true and of the fact which is real to satisfy the wishes which led to the belief being entertained and the fact being created. Thus complete truth and complete reality are to be found reconciled at the end of the road which leads to the complete satisfaction of our wishes, and the axiom 'Man is the measure of all things' has been faithfully maintained as the touchstone of the Pragmatist philosophy in Psychology, in Logic, and in Metaphysics.

Criticism. It cannot be said that Pragmatism has ever become a widely held philosophical theory. It has been popular rather with the scientist and the plain matter-of-fact man, to whose instinctive methods of thought it extends a semi-philosophic sanction, than with the professional philosopher whose speculations it is apt to dismiss as barren and academic. It may be doubted, however, whether the opposition to Pragmatism springs wholly from those vested interests of the academic mind in the logical formulae whose validity is threatened, to which the Pragmatist would have us attribute it.

Objections of a serious kind can be and have been brought

against the theory of Pragmatism, which seem to invalidate its claim to give a satisfactory account of the nature of thought and of reality.

Some of these objections we must briefly consider.

The Pragmatist, as we have seen, regards experience as a continuous flux or stream from which the mind selects certain aspects according to the interests of the perceiver, and then proceeds to work them up into the chairs and tables of everyday existence.

But if experience is really an indeterminate flux or blur, as void of distinction, say, as a sheet of white paper, it may be asked why mind should carve out of it certain objects rather than others. Why, for example, should my mind carve out a chair instead of a rhinoceros as the object upon which I am now sitting, unless there is some distinctive mark or feature in reality itself in virtue of which I do in fact say 'chair' and not 'rhinoceros'? Is it not, then, necessary to assume, as most philosophers have assumed, that reality is not wholly featureless, not wholly without differentiation, but contains within itself certain rudimentary distinctions which form the basis upon which mind builds the structure of the world known to science and to common sense? Whichever view of the matter we take, however, Pragmatism finds itself in a dilemma. Let us consider the two alternatives separately.

1. If, on the one hand, it is true that mind can arbitrarily carve out of the flow of experience whatsoever it pleases without let or hindrance from reality, if, in short, mind can, as the Pragmatist holds, make its own facts, how is it possible for a fact so made to thwart the purposes of the maker?

Pragmatism, as we have seen, regards scientific laws as postulates which are progressively verified or invalidated by their success or failure in conforming with the facts. But, if we select our own facts, in what sense is it possible for them not to verify the postulates we have formed? Pragmatism, which holds that some postulates work and become true while others fail to work and

are therefore abandoned, obviously envisages the possibility of facts sometimes conforming to a hypothesis and sometimes failing to do so: yet it is equally obvious that the psychology of fact-making upon which Pragmatism is based rules this possibility out of court.

It is difficult to see, therefore, how on Pragmatist premises any postulate, or truth claim as it is called, can fail to make good, seeing that, whatever consequences its adoption involves, the postulate, being arbitrarily selected from the flow of reality to serve our purposes, must necessarily have the effect of serving those purposes. But, if this is the case, the Pragmatist theory of truth is convicted of the very defect which it imputes to its rivals, the defect, namely, of failing to provide a criterion by which true beliefs are to be distinguished from false beliefs.

But the assumption that mind makes its facts by selecting from the indeterminate flux of experience is attended by difficulties as serious for the Humanist view of reality as those in which it involves the Pragmatist theory of truth. It follows from this assumption, as we have seen, that mind constructs its own facts, pronouncing that to be real which it has 'conceived after the likeness of the heart's desire, the product of a human purpose'. Only those facts are real, then, which are in accordance with our purposes. It is, however, undoubtedly and unfortunately true that many facts thwart our purposes. How do these facts come into being? The Pragmatist, who defines a real fact as that which is selected because it serves our purposes and is in fact made real because it serves them, is driven to assert that disagreeable facts are in some sense illusory. The steps by which he arrives at this result are as follows: the only facts we recognize are those which we have ourselves selected: we select facts which serve our purposes; therefore either (1) it is impossible for us to know facts which do not serve our purposes; or (2) if this conclusion proves contrary to experience, those facts which we know but which do not serve our purposes must be unreal facts: they

are appearances only. Hence we are committed to the time-honoured distinction between the world of appearance, which is the world of experience, and the world of reality, a distinction as complete as that established by the Idealist philosophers Kant and Hegel, which Pragmatists are never weary of attacking. It is only in the world of reality that the Pragmatist doctrine of 'real facts' holds good, and the world of reality is unfortunately not the world we know. The whole doctrine, therefore, reduces itself, in Mr. Russell's words, 'to the proposition that it would be heavenly to live in a world where one's philosophy was true'—a proposition which no philosopher would desire to controvert.

2. Let us now consider the second alternative.

It is possible that a Pragmatist, if pressed, might admit that the flux of experience is not entirely featureless. He might commit himself to the proposition that rudimentary marks or articulations are actually given in reality, and that it is the function of mind by selection, emphasis, and amplification to work up the embryonic distinctions which exist in reality into the fully developed world of objects with which common sense is acquainted. Perception, then, consists of recognizing and working up distinctions which are already there, not of introducing distinctions which do not exist. But, if this view of reality is taken, it is clear that our selection of fact can never be completely arbitrary. If the stuff of reality is composed of rudimentary objects which are given, and are given in a certain juxtaposition, and of rudimentary events which are given, and are given in a certain order, then it is clearly possible for the view of reality constructed by one mind to be either more or less correct than the view of reality constructed by another. Greater correctness would appear to be constituted by greater approximation in the world of objects as constructed to the world of rudimentary distinctions as given: lesser correctness by an arbitrary construction which to all intents and purposes ignored the features of the presented reality.

But the notion that there may be a rudimentary order in reality which is given and not made, involving as it does the assumption that one man's view of reality may be truer than another's, opens the door to a new conception of the meaning of truth. If, in fact, there is some sense in which A's view of reality, being largely based on the rudimentary features of the given, is truer than B's which largely ignores them, is not this sense precisely that which is asserted to be the meaning of truth by the correspondence theory of truth, the sense, namely, in which a true view of reality is one which corresponds with reality?

This consideration at once suggests a criticism of the essential doctrine of Pragmatism, the doctrine of the meaning of truth. It has been suggested by critics of Pragmatism, notably by Mr. Bertrand Russell, that the definition of the meaning of truth as 'that which gives emotional satisfaction' springs from an ambiguity in the use of the word 'means'.

Let us first of all consider two propositions in which the word 'means' is used in the two different senses which it is capable of bearing. We can either say (1) that 'cloud means rain', or (2) that '*pluie* means rain'. Now the sense in which 'cloud means rain' is different from that in which '*pluie* means rain'. We say that a 'cloud means rain' because it possesses the causal properties and characteristics of being liable to produce rain; we say that '*pluie* means rain' because the words '*pluie*' and 'rain', both of which are symbols for communicating what is in our thoughts, happen to be symbols for communicating the same thought in the minds of two different people. Now the sense normally given to the word 'means' is this latter sense, and the question, 'What is the meaning of truth?' can therefore be paraphrased, 'What is it that we have in our minds when we say that a belief is true?'

Now let us consider the Pragmatist definition of truth in the light of these two possible meanings of 'means'.

The Pragmatist begins by inquiring why it is that we affirm a certain belief to be true. He answers this question, and, in the light of modern psychological developments, we may agree that he answers it approximately correctly, by stating that we affirm those beliefs to be true which further our purposes. From the proposition that 'a belief which furthers our purpose is a belief which we affirm to be true', he deduces the further proposition, with which we may also agree, that 'the fact that a belief furthers our purposes causes us to affirm that belief to be true'.

Having reached this stage he proceeds to deduce one more proposition, and, in order to make this further deduction, he utilizes the first meaning of 'means' as defined above. He notices, that is to say, that there is a sense in which if A *causes* B we may affirm that A *means* B, and applies this sense of the word 'means' to his definition of truth. He then deduces from the proposition 'belief furthering our purposes causes us to think belief true', the further proposition 'furthering our purposes' is what truth *means*.

Having established this proposition the Pragmatist thinks that he has satisfactorily defined the meaning of truth. And it must be admitted that he has defined it, but only in terms of the first sense of the word 'means' referred to above, the sense, that is to say, in which a cloud *means* rain because a cloud *causes* rain. But we agreed that this is not the sense in which we commonly use the word 'means', and, in particular, it is not the sense which we have in mind when we ask, 'What is the meaning of truth?'

If, then, we agree that there is a distinction between (*a*) what we have in mind when we say a belief is true, and (*b*) what causes us to say that a belief is true, it is clear that the Pragmatic definition of the meaning of truth which may be justly given as an account of (*b*) is not the correct interpretation of (*a*). It follows, therefore, that the meaning of truth must be something other than 'furthering our purposes'.

The question of what does constitute the meaning of truth is one of the most controversial in philosophy, and raises many interesting problems. It is, however, a question which it is beyond the scope of the present chapter to discuss. It is sufficient for our present purpose if we can show that the meaning of truth is something other than what the Pragmatist asserts. And if the truth of a belief is not to be identified with its usefulness, the theory that truth is man-made, the theory, that is, that truth is created by a progressive verification of the beliefs for which truth is claimed, also falls to the ground.

The Pragmatist, it will be remembered, draws a distinction between a belief which has not yet been tested by the criterion of whether it works—such a belief being called a truth claim—and a belief whose consequences have been found to be satisfactory, the truth of which is said to be validated or established. But the psychological argument which underlies the Pragmatic theory only establishes the fact that the beliefs which further our purposes are those which we persist in calling true after reflection, and that we do so persist for the very reason that they further our purposes. But unless we identify the truth of a belief with the properties which a belief must possess in order that we may call it true, the fact that we persist in holding a belief after reflection does not mean that the belief is true. Many beliefs which have been held by large numbers of reflective men over considerable periods, such as the belief that the earth is flat, have been shown to be not wholly true by the test of correspondence with Reality.

The Pragmatist theory, then, may reasonably claim to be on safe ground in so far as it asserts, (1) that we tend to hold those beliefs to be true which are emotionally satisfying; (2) that we persist in holding a belief to be true if the consequences of its adoption are found to be satisfactory. It is incorrect in making the further assertion (3) that those properties, such as the property

of having satisfactory consequences, which cause us to regard a belief as true, are the same thing as the truth of a belief.

It should, however, be borne in mind that if the implications of the Pragmatist psychology are logically developed, and reality is regarded merely as a featureless flux from which we arbitrarily select aspects and carve out objects, then the view that the meaning of truth is correspondence with fact becomes meaningless. With a reality so conceived any belief would correspond, and, since we ourselves construct the facts with which to verify our beliefs, all beliefs would be true.

If, therefore, we grant the Pragmatist theory of perception, there is no reason why we should not accept the Pragmatist theory of truth, even although it involves the conclusion that all beliefs are necessarily true.

5

The Philosophy of Bergson

I

THE essential doctrines of Bergson's philosophy are set forth in three books entitled, in the English translation, *Time and Free Will*, published in 1888, *Matter and Memory*, published in 1896, and *Creative Evolution*, which appeared in 1907.

The philosophy expounded in these books, although simple in outline and in structure, is based upon a central principle which it is exceedingly difficult to grasp. Just as the Pragmatists invoke the authority of Protagoras's remark, 'Man is the measure of all things', in support of their relativist doctrines, so does M. Bergson adopt and elaborate as the central principle of his philosophy Heraclitus's famous maxim to the effect that 'everything changes'. The understanding of the significance of this apparently simple statement constitutes the chief difficulty in Bergson's philosophy,

and though he has brought a lucidity of expression, a charm of style, and a wealth of imaginative insight such as no philosopher since Plato has possessed, to the task of reconciling this principle with the common-sense notion of the Universe as composed of solid objects extended in space, his doctrine still remains something of a stumbling-block to the man in the street.

It will be convenient to divide our treatment of Bergson's central principle into three sections. In the first we will consider the various lines of approach by which Bergson reaches it; in the second, we will consider its nature; and in the third, the nature of the faculty through which we become aware of it. We shall then proceed to examine the consequences which follow from the acceptance of the principle, more particularly as touching the character of the intellect and the nature of matter.

I. The path along which Bergson travels in search of his central principle, that everything is change, lies mainly through biology and psychology.

(*a*) *Biology*. Bergson's philosophy devotes considerable attention to the study of biology; and seeks to explain the process of evolution on novel lines.

The facts of evolution which are now generally admitted have, in the main, been attributed to the operation of one or the other of two rival principles. According to Darwin, chance variations in species fortuitously occur; and of these variations those which are most suited to their environment tend to survive and to reproduce themselves. The whole process is a purely chance affair, in which it is not possible to detect the operation of purposive design or driving force. According to Lamarck, adaptation to environment is the determining factor in evolution. As environment changes species put forth new developments to adapt themselves to it: those which are the more successful in compassing the necessary adaptations tend to survive; the others tend to die out. Now both these theories of evolution are in agreement

as regards one essential point: both conceive the whole process of evolution on mechanical lines; both find it unnecessary to postulate the existence of mind or purpose to explain how and why the process takes place.

These so-called mechanist theories of evolution tend to regard the Universe like the works of a gigantic clock: once the clock is wound up (an operation which mechanists feel no compunction for their inability to explain, since the winding up would be tantamount to that mechanistic impossibility, a first cause), the whole organism of the Universe proceeds indefinitely by the mere automatic interaction of the parts.

Now it is this theory of evolution that Bergson questions. He catalogues a long list of phenomena taken from insect, animal, and vegetable life which, it is asserted, are inexplicable on mechanistic principles. The factors normally regarded as those which determine evolution, adaptation to environment, and chance survival of the fittest, totally fail, for example, to explain what is known as transformism or the occurrence of variations in species, and in particular those peculiar types of abrupt variation called mutations.[1] They are also unable to account for such phenomena as the metamorphoses undergone by the insect.

In particular Bergson asks why, if the determining factor in evolution is adaptation to environment, evolution did not cease thousands of years ago. 'A very inferior organism', he says, 'is as well adapted as ours to the conditions of existence, judged by its success in maintaining life: why, then, does life, which has succeeded in adapting itself, go on complicating itself and complicating itself more and more dangerously? . . . Why did not life stop wherever it was possible? Why has it gone on? Why

[1] It is now generally held that some species change by manifesting abrupt and important variations which are not the final stage in a series of gradual developments, but occur spontaneously without any corresponding change in the environment of the species. These sudden variations are called mutations.

indeed, unless it be that there is an impulse driving it to take ever greater and greater risks towards its goal of an ever higher and higher efficiency?'

This impulse is a kind of vital surge, an immanent principle which pervades, which drives, which indeed is whatever is life. It is in fact the *élan vital* which has made Bergson's philosophy so famous. Bergson's contention is that this *élan vital* is the thrusting force behind evolution, and that without it it is impossible to explain how and why the movement of evolution occurs: the factors emphasized by the mechanists play their part in determining the direction of evolution at any given moment, but they are incapable of explaining why evolution should take place at all.

'The truth is,' says Bergson, 'that adaptation explains the inner windings of evolutionary progress, but not the general direction of the movement, still less the movement itself.'

Biology therefore supplies us with a series of facts, which can only be explained on the assumption that the Universe is the creation and expression of a vital force or impulse, whose function it is continually to change and to evolve.

(*b*) *Psychology.* The facts of psychology point to a similar conclusion. Mechanist theories of evolution have their counterpart in the so-called parallelist theory of psychology. This theory asserts that whatever changes occur in the body are accompanied by corresponding changes in consciousness. There is, in fact, a complete parallelism between the mind and the body, so that, even if we do not assume an actual causal relationship, it is nevertheless true that all psychological phenomena are, as it were, the reflections of physiological modifications whose occurrence renders them possible.

More extreme forms of the theory tend to abolish mind as a separate entity in the human make-up altogether. Mind is regarded either as the sum total of the neural correlates which

constitute the brain, or as a highly attenuated material substance surrounding the brain, like the halo round the head of a saint. In either event, whatever happens in the mind is the result of something that has first happened in the brain, and the material always and in all respects determines and conditions the mental.

Bergson brings against this conception a further series of facts with which it is incompatible. Experiments have shown that the excision of large portions of the brain, and of those very portions which were considered essential for the causation of mental activity, have been succeeded by no psychological disturbance: whereas, if mental is the result of cerebral activity, modifications in psychology should inevitably have followed. The phenomena of abnormal psychology, and especially of dual personality, are independent of any corresponding physiological change. Subconscious mental activity is also inexplicable on the parallelist hypothesis. Bergson infers that mental activity conditions cerebral activity and overflows it. The brain is not consciousness, nor does it contain the cause of conscious processes: it is simply the organ of consciousness, the point at which consciousness enters into matter; and, as we shall shortly see, it has been evolved by consciousness for certain specific purposes which are bound up with the necessity for action.

If mental activity is fundamental and cerebral activity incidental, if consciousness is independent of the brain and only employs the brain for certain special purposes, how is consciousness to be defined? The answer is that consciousness is the *élan vital* itself; and in order to understand Bergson's central conception to which the facts both of biology and psychology have pointed us, it is necessary to consider a little more closely what the nature of our consciousness really is, since we shall only come to understand the *élan vital* by observing its operations in ourselves.

II. *The élan vital.* Bergson then asks us to examine the nature

of consciousness. What is the precise meaning of the word 'exist', when, for instance, we say we exist?

At first sight consciousness appears to consist of a succession of psychic states, each of which is a single and independent entity, these states being strung together along something which is called the 'ego', like beads on a necklace. But reflection soon shows this conception to be erroneous; and the error consists more particularly in the fact that, when we admit that one state changes and gives way to another, we overlook the fact that it changes even while it persists. Take, says Bergson, 'the most stable of internal states, the visual perception of a motionless object. The object may remain the same, I may look at it from the same side, at the same angle, in the same light: nevertheless, the vision I now have of it differs from that which I have just had, even if only because the one is an instant older than the other. My memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present. My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration it accumulates.' If this is the case with regard to our perception of external objects, it is even more true as a description of our internal states, our desires, our emotions, our willings, and so forth. The conclusion is, in Bergson's words, that 'we change without ceasing, and the state itself is nothing but change'. 'There is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change at every moment: if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow.'

It follows that there is no real difference between passing from one state to another and continuing in what is called the same state. We imagine such a difference because it is only when the continual change in any one state has become sufficiently marked to arrest our attention that we do in fact notice it, with the result that we assert that one state has given way to another. Thus, we postulate a series of successive mental states, because our attention is forced upon them in a series of successive mental acts.

It is for the same reason that we tend to regard ourselves as beings who endure continually in spite of change. Just as we say there exist separate states which change, so we speak of a self which experiences changing psychic states, and this self, we say, endures. But we have no more experience of an unchanging ego than we have of an unchanging psychic state: however far we push our analysis, we never reach such an unchanging ego. There is in fact nothing which endures through change because there is nothing which does not change.

Hence Bergson arrives at the truth that we ourselves are beings who endure not through change but by change. Our life, as actually experienced, as the inmost reality of which we are sure, is change itself. 'If', says Bergson, 'our existence were composed of separate states with an impassive ego to unite them, for us there would be no duration. For an ego which does not change does not endure, and a psychic state which remains the same so long as it is not replaced by the following state, does not endure either.'

There is thus no self which changes: there is indeed nothing which changes—for in asserting the existence of that which changes, we are asserting the existence of something which, from the mere fact that it is subject to change, is not itself change—there is simply change.

The truth that we are beings whose reality is change supplies the clue with which we can now proceed to consider and to understand the constitution of the Universe. For the Universe is that same stream of continual change or '*becoming*', as Bergson calls it, that we experience in ourselves. Try as we will to penetrate through the changing appearances presented by material things to something behind them which is stable and unchanging, we never reach it. Just as in our examination of human consciousness we found that what appeared at first sight to be a series of motionless states, each of which persisted until replaced by

another, was in fact a continuous process of change, so the view of reality which represents it as a series of bodies possessing qualities which similarly persist until they are replaced, is found to be equally misleading. Every body, every quality even, resolves itself, on scientific analysis, into an enormous quantity of elementary movements. Whether we represent them as vibrations, or as ether waves, or as negative electrons, or as event particles, it is equally impossible to arrive at something which is sufficiently stable to be spoken of as that in which the changes, or movements take place. For if at any stage such an apparent something is reached, and you affirm of it that this is the '*thing*' that changes or in which the changes take place, further examination will always be found to show that the thing itself is composed of changes, which are other than and additional to the changes which we predicated of it when we said, 'Here is something that changes, which is itself other than change'. Hence there is nothing in the Universe which changes, just as there is nothing in the self which changes, for the very reason that a something which changes would be something other than change, and such a something can never be discerned. The Universe is conceived, then, as one continuous flow or surge, and evolution as the mere movement of the flow or surge. The process of evolution is visualized as though there is somewhere a centre from which worlds and life and matter were thrown off like fireworks in a vast illumination. But even this centre is not a concrete thing; if it were, it would be something other than ceaseless change, and we have seen that nothing but ceaseless change can exist. The centre is therefore described as a 'continuity of outflow', a metaphorical expression to suggest that the vital surge has neither beginning nor end, completeness nor finality. This description is inherent in the general conception; for if the vital surge had a beginning or an end, there would be something before or after the vital surge which was not

the vital surge; that is to say, there would be something other than mere change. The world, then, is the embodiment of an immanent principle, which, as it comes into existence, progressively creates the evolving Universe.

We must now ask by what means we become aware of the real nature of that which is so strikingly belied by its superficial appearances.

III. *Intuition.* Bergson holds that the method by which we arrive at metaphysical truth consists not in the exercise of the intellect, but in the deliverances of a faculty which he calls Intuition. It is through intuition, and through intuition alone, that we realize our participation in the vital surge. In order that we may understand what is meant by the word '*participation*', it is necessary that we should pay attention to an aspect of the *élan vital* which has not yet been stressed, the aspect of it which Bergson calls '*Duration*'.

The history of philosophy bears record to a long and heated controversy as to the nature of time. Some philosophers have held that time is real; others that it is merely a form which is imposed upon reality by the nature and limitations of our understanding, reality itself being timeless.

Bergson's contribution to this problem consists of drawing an important distinction between two different conceptions which are included in the meaning of the word 'time'. In the first place there is what is called mathematical or scientific time. This time does not form part of the reality of the so-called external world of material things: it is simply a relation between material things. If we consider any material thing which passes through two successive states, and then double the rapidity of succession between the two states, the operation of doubling the rapidity of succession will in no way affect the reality or the nature of the states, nor of the material thing which passes through the states. If, further, we imagine the rapidity of the succession of states

infinitely increased, so that the whole of existence were presented instantaneously to the contemplation of an omnipotent being, the relations between the objects presented would remain constant, and the reality of the objects would therefore remain unaffected. Time, then, as science conceives it, is not part of the material world. Time is thought to exist as a relation between things, because our intellect requires us to conceive things as succeeding one another in time for purposes of its own: it is, therefore, a form which appears to be necessary for the understanding of reality by the intellect.

There is, however, another kind of time which Bergson calls '*Duration*'; and *Duration* is nothing but the *élan vital* itself. As we have seen, change is the reality of the existence of a living being; our actual experience, the one thing of which we are completely sure, is a constant flow, and it is this flow which Bergson calls *Duration*. This *Duration* is not a mere succession of instants; it is, in Bergson's words, 'the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future'. In virtue of the fact that we ourselves are living beings, we belong to the stream of *Duration*, and, if we attend sufficiently closely to our own experience, we can become conscious of the pulsing of *Duration* within us. But our attention must not be an attention of the intellect; it must rather be of an instinctive character. It is through instinct that we feel ourselves to be one with reality; it is through instinct that we appear to ourselves to enter into the flow of life and to live it. Now Bergson gives a distinctive name to instinct, or rather to that aspect of the instinctive side of our natures through which we become directly conscious of the *Duration* in which we participate. It is to instinct in this relationship that he gives the name of '*Intuition*'. 'Instinct', says Bergson, 'is sympathy. If this sympathy could extend its object and also reflect upon itself, it would give us the key to vital operations.' Now Intuition is nothing more nor less than instinct conscious of itself; it is

instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely.

Let us consider for a moment for purposes of illustration the character of a symphony. There appear to be two quite separate and distinct ways in which we may regard a symphony: in the first we shall think of it merely as an aggregate or accumulation of the various notes of which it is composed, just as we may think of a picture as the sum total of the various paints and colours which the artist places upon his canvas; in the second we shall regard it not as an aggregate but as a whole, that is to say, as something which is brought into existence by the coming together of its parts, but which is, nevertheless, a new and complete entity over and above the sum of those parts. It is clear that there is a very important sense in which the reality of the symphony may be said to consist not of the isolated and separate notes of which it is composed, but of the indivisible and complete whole which, as we say, *is* the symphony. Now the view which Intuition gives us of reality is like the second way of regarding the symphony. It is by Intuition that we enter into and appreciate the meaning of the symphony as an indivisible whole: it is by Intuition that we enter into and grasp the nature of reality as an indivisible whole. But if Intuition is involved in the appreciation of a picture or a symphony, it is involved still more directly in their creation. The great artist creates by penetrating through the superficial appearance presented by his subject to the reality beneath: it is, in fact, his vision of this reality that constitutes his greatness as an artist. This vision he places upon the canvas, and it is in the reality of this vision and not in the paint, the colours, the form, the technique, or the faithful portrayal of the subject that the essence of the picture lies. And just as it is only by entering through sympathy into the life and meaning of his subject that the artist succeeds in grasping it, so it is through the sympathy which is Intuition that we are enabled to enter

into the ceaseless flow of the reality which is our life and to grasp its nature.

Thus, the Intuition we have of our life and our experience as ceaseless change is knowledge of reality itself, and all beliefs about the nature of reality other than those arrived at by intuition are misleading.

IV. *Intellect and Matter.* What, then, is the function of intellect, and what is the relation to reality of that view of the Universe as a collection of solid material objects extended in space, with which the intellect presents us? These two questions are really the same question; for matter is the view of reality given to us by our intellect, and our intellect is constructed for the purpose of presenting us with a material Universe.

The intellect, according to Bergson, is a very special faculty evolved for the purposes of action. Life in a world of ceaseless flow and change would present difficulties from the point of view of effective action, which the intellect is designed to overcome. The intellect therefore makes cuts across the living flow of reality, and carves out of it solid objects, which we call material objects, and separate states of consciousness which persist until they are succeeded by other states. But the distinct outlines we see in an object are not really there in the flux of reality. They are only the design that we have imposed on reality to suit our own purposes. The edges and surfaces, the shapes and forms of things, are, as it were, the representation of the actions that we desire to take with regard to these things: this representation, which emanates from ourselves, is reflected back upon ourselves by reality as by a mirror, so that we falsely believe reality to possess in its own right the modifications and features that proceed from us.

In the case of motion this manipulation by the intellect of reality has surprising results. Philosophy is full of the contradictions to which the conception of motion which has been evolved by the intellect gives rise. 'Let us consider an arrow in

its flight,' said the old Greek philosopher Zeno; 'it is easy to show that the motion of the arrow is an illusion. For, consider the position of the arrow at any one point or moment of the flight: either it is where it is, or it is where it isn't; if it is where it is, it cannot be moving, otherwise it would not be there; and it cannot be where it isn't. Therefore the arrow does not move at that moment; similarly the arrow does not move at any other moment. Therefore the arrow does not move at all.'

William James applied a similar analysis to the lapse of time. It is easy, he said, to show that a period of time, say an hour, can never elapse; for half of that period must elapse before the whole of it; but half of the remaining half-hour must also elapse before the whole of it, and half of the remaining quarter of an hour before the whole of that quarter of an hour. Thus, some portion of time, however short, must always elapse before the whole can elapse: therefore the whole can never elapse.

These results have led many philosophers to believe that motion, change, and time are unreal. Bergson, as we have seen, holds that motion, change, and time are the only reality, and he proceeds therefore to attribute the difficulties which Zeno and William James propounded to the cutting-up operations of the intellect. The intellect takes the flow of motion and cuts it up into moments and points; it takes the lapse of time and cuts it up into hours and half-hours. But these divisions imposed by the intellect, these stops inserted in the continuous flow of reality, are unreal and give rise to unreal results. It is not motion and time that the intellect grasps, but points in motion and intervals of time. The intellect, in fact, is cinematographic. One of the most ingenious of Bergson's similes in illustration of the operations of the intellect is his comparison of the intellect to the cinematograph. The cinematograph takes snapshot views of something which is moving, say a regiment of soldiers, each of which represents the regiment in a fixed and stable attitude. You may lay

these snapshot photographs side by side and multiply them indefinitely, but you will not have re-created the movement of the original: you will be presented only with an infinite number of static pictures. In order, then, that your pictures may be animated, you must introduce movement somewhere; and it is not until you unroll your film on the operator's apparatus that, for a series of static pictures, you substitute a moving representation of the moving original.

The pictures of reality presented to us by the intellect are precisely similar to the series of static snapshots before they are placed upon the apparatus, and they substitute, in a precisely similar way, a succession of objects extended in space for the ceaseless flow and change of the original. Thus the intellect presents us with a false view of reality, because, in order to further the purposes of action, that is to say, the ends which we desire to obtain, it represents reality as composed of points upon which we may rest. 'If matter', says Bergson, 'appeared to us as a perpetual flowing, we should assign no termination to any of our actions. . . . In order that our activity may leap from an act to an act, it is necessary that matter should pass from a state to a state.'

Hence the intellect seeks always to present to us the results of motions and the ends of action, just because it is not interested in the fact of motion and the reality of action. The intellect, therefore, introduces stops or articulations into the ceaseless flow of reality; and it is these stops and articulations, which the intellect has inserted for us, that provide the ground-work for the common-sense notion of reality as composed of solid objects which are separated from each other by real distinctions.

Matter. At this point, however, it is necessary to make a reservation; for, in cutting up the flow of the Universe into a world of material objects, the intellect is not acting *quite* arbitrarily. Matter is not a *mere* figment of the intellect; it

exists in reality in its own right, or rather something exists other than the direct flow of life, which is the aspect of the *élan vital* hitherto considered, and to this 'something' intellect is specifically related. The intellect and matter are, in Bergson's view, relative to each other: they were cut simultaneously by an identical process from the *élan vital* which contained and contains them both.

But when we put the question, 'What is the real nature of this aspect of the *élan vital*, which the intellect works up for us into a world of solid matter?' the answer is not so clear as we could wish.

The *élan vital* is a creative impulsion of endless duration; but its continual movement does not proceed without interruption: at a certain point the flow is interrupted and, like the recoil of a spring, turns back upon itself. This inverse movement is matter. Everything is still ceaseless change and flow, but matter is a flow in a direction opposite to that of the vital surge itself. In order to illustrate this conception of matter Bergson again has recourse to metaphor. Life is likened to a rocket whose extinguished remains fall to the ground as matter; and again, life is like a fountain, which, expanding as it rises, partially arrests or delays the drops which fall back: the jet of the fountain is vital activity in its highest form, the drops which fall back are the creative movement dissipated: in short, they are matter.

Free Will. Bergson's view of the intellect as a tool which has been fashioned in the course of evolution for the purposes of life enables him to approach the vexed question of free will from a new angle. Bergson admits the contention of the determinists that, if we consider any single action in isolation, it is possible to prove by irrefutable reasoning that it is entirely determined by what has preceded it. This contention is true, whether we attribute the causation of the action to the influence of an external physical environment, and see in every case of ill temper another instance of faulty digestion, or whether we locate it in the

psychology of the individual, and, pointing to the obvious fact that he is responsible neither for his motives nor his desires, demonstrate that his action is determined by the strongest motive or desire at the moment.

But this interpretation is only true of the action taken in isolation. And the action taken in isolation is a false intellectual abstraction. It is the intellect which, as we have seen, thinks of our life as divided into states of consciousness which remain static until replaced by other states and actions which characterize these states; and having made this abstraction the intellect proceeds to reason about the actions so abstracted, as if they were isolated and self-contained entities springing from and entirely conditioned by the preceding states.

But, as we have seen, the life of the individual is not to be regarded as a succession of changing states; the life of the individual is a continuous and indivisible flow, and it is precisely when taken as such that it is seen to be free and undetermined. Divide the individual's life into parts, consider the individual's actions separately, and you will find that each part and each action is determined by its predecessors. But what is true of the parts is not true of the personality as a whole. It is the nature of life to be creative, and the individual taken as a whole is necessarily creative from the mere fact that he is alive. But if his life is creative, and creative in each moment of it, it is clear that it is not determined by what went before. If it were so determined it would only be an expression of the old, and not a creation of the new.

Free will, then, is creative action: determinism is a belief imposed upon us by our intellectual view of reality, which reasons so convincingly, not about our lives as a whole, but about a false abstraction from our lives which it calls individual actions. But do we after all really believe in determinism? Our reason may indeed be convinced, but our instinctive belief persisting in the

teeth of reason is that we are free. Why? Because this instinctive belief is of the character of Intuition, whose function it is to comprehend our life as a whole. In so doing it realizes that, as such, life is a creative activity, and insists therefore on its freedom to create the future.

One question still remains to complete our short sketch of Bergson's philosophy. If reality consists of a continuous vital flow, whence does this flow arise? what was there before it to bring it into being? how in fact can the Universe have sprung from nothingness? According to Bergson this is a question which should not be put, and the fact that it has been so frequently put in the past has had consequences of enormous importance in philosophy. The question arises from an illusion of the intellect which opposes the idea of nothingness to the idea of something, the idea of a void to the idea of the All, and assumes therefore that the absence of the something would be equivalent to the presence of nothing. But this idea of nothingness is a false idea: nothingness is necessarily unthinkable, since to think even of nothing is to think in some way: to imagine even one's own annihilation is to be conscious of oneself using one's imagination to abolish oneself.

When I say, 'There is nothing', it is not that I perceive 'a nothing'; I can only perceive what is; but I have not perceived that which I sought for and expected, and I express my regret in the language of my desire. And just as the so-called perception of nothing is the missing what is sought, so the thought of nothing is the thought of the absence of the particular something with which one is acquainted. Hence the absence of the order of reality, which is the *élan vital*, would not be equivalent to mere chaos or disorder, but would inevitably involve the presence of some other order.

The question therefore, 'What is the origin or source of the *élan vital* itself?' should not be asked, since it posits the existence

of a nothing prior to the *élan vital* from which the *élan vital* may be supposed to have evolved, and, in so doing, posits a logical fiction. It is because philosophers have insisted on asking this question that they have been wrongly led to suppose that reality is one and permanent, and that change is an illusion. The belief that the absence of the order of reality with which they were acquainted would involve mere nothing, combined with the inability to conceive how something could ever have been generated out of such a nothing, has led them to suppose that the order of reality with which they were acquainted must have always existed, eternally the same. Change, then, was written off as illusory appearance, and the intellect was invoked to penetrate through to an alleged immutable reality subsisting behind the changing and unreal appearances of matter. Once, however, the illusory character of the idea of nothing is grasped, it becomes superfluous to ask whence did reality arise, and the conception of reality as change becomes possible.

II

The above constitutes a brief outline of Bergson's philosophy. It is a philosophy expounded with such charm and lucidity, the arguments with which it is supported are so ingenious, and the cumulative force of the wealth of detail with which it is built up is so strong, that the reader finds difficulty in avoiding whole-hearted conversion, at any rate at the time. He thinks continually as he reads, but he is rarely allowed time to stop to think. When he does do so, doubts begin to assail him.

These doubts may be summed up under two heads, doubts as to the reality of Bergson's metaphysic, and doubts as to the validity of his logic.

Let us briefly consider what these doubts are.

1. Bergson presents us with a reality which is a continuous

flow or stream. It is a pure becoming, without feature or individuation of any kind, the distinctions and shapes which we discern in it being due to the cutting up, discriminating, and selecting operations of the intellect for the practical needs of life.

But such a conception of reality is exposed to the same difficulty as that which beset the continuum of the Pragmatists. If reality is quite featureless, the view of reality with which the intellect presents us must, in spite of Bergson's disclaimer, be quite arbitrary. When on Bergson's premises my intellect carves out of reality a table and a chair for the purposes of my action, it might just as reasonably, so far as the nature of reality is concerned, carve out a rhinoceros and an elephant: it only presents me with the chair and the table because they are more convenient for my purposes. But as a matter of fact the intellect is very far from carving out of reality the sort of objects and events we should naturally choose. If A desires to elope with the daughter of B, and the only way of effecting his escape consists in catching the 8.15 from Charing Cross, it serves the purposes of A that the 8.15 should leave to time, just as clearly as it does not serve the purposes of the pursuing B. Yet both A and B agree to carve out of reality the same 8.15 leaving at the same moment. It would seem, then, that the objects we carve from the flux of reality are not purely arbitrary intellectual constructions, but do correspond to some rudimentary distinctions existing in the real which are not the work of the intellect.

The Bergsonian conception of matter points to the same conclusion. Matter is described as a reverse movement of the flow of reality, due to an interruption of the flow. But there can be no interruption without something to interrupt. What, then, is the something that interrupts? It cannot be the flow, because the flow could only interrupt itself in virtue of some stoppage in itself, and the stoppage would then be the interruption which it seeks to explain; nor can it be matter, since matter proceeds

from the interruption and is not therefore the interruption which causes matter. We are driven, then, to suppose that the real must contain the seeds of division in itself; that, instead of being a featureless becoming, it is variegated and articulated, and that, instead of being pure change, it contains elements other than change, which are able to interrupt the change.

If it were not so, we may well ask how the appearance of diversity and solidity that matter undoubtedly presents can be explained. The answer that the appearance is an illusion due to the operations of the intellect will not satisfy us; for even if we assume that shape and form, solidity and diversity are illusions, we have still to ask whether the fact of the illusion itself does not point to some flaw in the structure of the real. It is in fact as difficult to explain how error and illusion can be generated from pure unindividuated reality, as to account for the fact of diversity and solidity in a Universe which is one throughout and change throughout. Bergson, in effect, says 'reality only appears to consist of solid objects in space because we cannot help thinking of it in that way'. But the question then becomes, how did we come to think of it in that way? And the only conceivable answer is, that if reality is not composed of matter extended in space but is pure becoming, then reality must be made to account for our error in thinking it is not pure becoming: reality therefore contains the seeds of error in itself: reality therefore is not a pure unity, but an initial plurality.

2. Now let us turn to Bergson's logic. The point of difficulty that immediately presents itself consists in the different functions assigned respectively to intuition and to intellect. The intellect has been evolved for the purposes of action, and gives us information of practical value; intuition enables us to see the limitations of intellect, and is required to supplement intellect before it is possible to attain to metaphysical truth.

Let us consider each faculty separately. The whole conception

of intuition is vague in the extreme. Intuition is defined as instinct conscious of itself, able to consider its purpose, and through consideration to enlarge and expand it. By instinct is meant the instinct of animals, in whom this faculty has attained a much greater degree of development than in man, and by instinct conscious of itself, instinct that has become so conscious through an admixture of intelligence. Bergson holds that in the last resort intuition by itself is not sufficient to give us metaphysical truth, but that it must first absorb intelligence. Intellect enriched and revivified by intuition, intuition which employs reason to take account of and to control its deliverances, constitute together the searchlight which reveals to us the nature of reality. The truth of Bergson's philosophy is ultimately perceived in this way.

With regard to this conception of intuition three criticisms may be urged.

(*a*) Bergson regards the difference between animals and man as one of kind and not of degree; and the difference in kind consists in the fact that man has developed intelligence, and the animals, more especially the insects, intuition. Hence in man intuition is feeble and discontinuous; in animals it is continuous and all-pervasive. This theory is, according to many psychologists, out of harmony with the facts, and the facts which it more particularly overlooks are those with regard to the subconscious self.

Subconscious psychology dominates animal and human activity alike, and there is an increasing tendency to regard the subconscious of the animal and the subconscious of the human being as essentially similar.

Animal instinct is, in fact, merely the first manifestation of that subconscious which appears in an enriched and expanded form in the human being, such differences as exist being due to the fact that animals and human beings are at different levels in the same evolutionary progression.

(*b*) If, however, the distinction of kind between men and animals be maintained, in what sense does Bergson assert the superiority of man? Bergson continually speaks of man as the success of evolution, as the one instance in which the *élan vital* has successfully broken through the deterministic forces of matter and established freedom, while the animals are the residual and waste products of an evolutionary thrust which has failed.

Yet the animals apparently possess in full measure that intuition which is the sovereign guide to truth, while man has it but feebly and discontinuously. Intuition in man is but a relic, a residue denoting the common origin from which both men and animals have sprung: presumably, therefore, as evolution proceeds, this residue will diminish to vanishing point, and the faculty of intuition will remain a prerogative of the animals. This reasoning suggests the conclusion that the apprehension by intuition of the true nature of reality, including the appreciation of Bergson's philosophy which alone correctly asserts the true nature of reality, will in course of time die out among human beings.

It is true that the animals will for a time be able to share Bergson's views on the nature of reality in virtue of their possession of intuition, but, as we may expect that the animals, who are to be numbered among the failures of evolution, will one day go to join the Mesozoic reptiles on the evolutionary scrap-heap, the truth that reality is change will sooner or later completely pass from the world. Bergson's view is not therefore an optimistic one with regard to the prospects of truth.

(*c*) If this conclusion be denied on the ground suggested above, that it is not by means of the intuition which animals possess, but through a glorified intuition which has absorbed intelligence, that metaphysical truth is known, we are committed to a position in which intuition is both judge and jury in its own cause.

The criterion of truth is to be found in intuition controlled by

intelligence; but the intelligence which controls the deliverances of intuition is itself a glorified intelligence which has been revivified by intuition. Thus, in the last resort, intuition is both the criterion of truth and that which asserts itself to be the criterion of truth, and the intelligence which is supposed to direct the deliverances of intuition is simply intuition under another name, judging in the interests of itself.

The Bergsonian conception of intellect is equally open to criticism. Bergson's position, as we have seen, is that the intellect is a special faculty evolved for the purposes of action; and to further these purposes it represents the flow of reality as cut up into segments. From this position one of two results must follow: either reality contains in itself distinctive marks or features, which are what the intellect finds already there, or reality is entirely featureless and the marks or features are inserted into it, or imposed upon it, by intellect. In the first case reality is not a perfect flow: in the second, the intellect presents us with a false view of reality.

Now it is clear that on the whole Bergson takes the second view of the relationship between intellect and reality, the view which regards the intellect as creating distinctions which are not given. 'Becoming', he says, 'is what our intellect and senses would show us of matter if they could obtain a direct and disinterested view of it.' It appears to follow, although Bergson never explicitly commits himself to this conclusion, that intellect takes a misleading view of reality. The intellect being relative to practical convenience, we are explicitly warned against supposing that it can give us metaphysical truth. 'But when in speculating on the nature of the real we go on regarding it as our practical interest requires us to, we become unable to perceive the true evolution, the radical becoming.' There is, moreover, a fine passage in the introduction to *Creative Evolution*, in which Bergson asks how the intellect, 'created by life in definite circumstances,

to act on definite things, can embrace life of which it is only an emanation or an aspect'.

But a philosophy which begins to look askance at intellect soon finds itself on dangerous ground: for the despised intellect is the tool with which the philosophy is constructed, the weapon with which it asserts its claims. The Greeks pointed out long ago that you cannot know that intellectual knowledge is unattainable, for your knowledge that intellectual knowledge is unattainable is itself a piece of intellectual knowledge. If, then, intellectual knowledge is really unattainable, then the intellectual knowledge which asserts its unattainability is itself unattainable; so that we cannot know that intellectual knowledge is necessarily unattainable. The existence of knowledge is in fact affirmed in the very act of its denial.

It has been frequently urged against Bergson that his philosophy, in denying that the intellect can give us truth about the Universe, exposes itself to the danger which the Greeks sought to avoid. For his denial that intellect can give us truth about the nature of the Universe is in itself an intellectual affirmation about the Universe, an affirmation to the effect that the Universe is such that the intellect does not give us truth about it. And if we examine the structure of Bergson's philosophy, we cannot avoid the conclusion that it is an intellectual achievement of the very highest order. It employs the most subtle dialectic, the most ingenious similes, the most persuasive arguments, all of which proceed from Bergson's intellect and are addressed to ours, to prove that the view which the intellect takes of reality is a false one.

But if this is so, then Bergson's philosophy, which is assuredly an intellectual view of reality, is a false philosophy; so that it turns out not to be true that the intellectual view of reality is false. In proportion therefore as Bergson discredits intellect, he discredits his own arguments: in proportion as he proves his point, he disproves his philosophy.

While admitting therefore the beauty and unity of Bergson's conception of reality, we cannot avoid the conclusion that, in trying to bring everything under the aegis of his single principle, he has exposed himself to logical objections of a serious character. This fact should not, however, be allowed to detract from the great value of his biological work, and of the achievement, which assuredly stands to his credit, of being the first to make a serious breach in that mechanistic view of life and the Universe, which held almost undisputed sway during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

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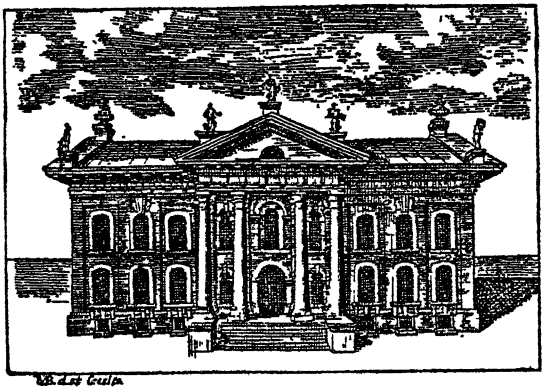

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